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## THE RULE OF THE STRAP





*A true Lochgelly Tawse held in the  
traditional over-the-shoulder position.*

# THE RULE OF THE STRAP

by Mary McKenzie

*Being the Recollections of a Mistress  
in a Scottish Girls' Corrective Institution*

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A Wildfire Club Edition

© Mary McKenzie

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# CONTENTS

<i>Foreword</i>	. . . . .	7
<i>Chapter 1</i>	<i>I Choose a Career</i> . . . . .	10
<i>Chapter 2</i>	<i>Approved School Life</i> . . . . .	17
<i>Chapter 3</i>	<i>My Shopping Expedition</i> . . . . .	42
<i>Chapter 4</i>	<i>The Escape</i> . . . . .	55
<i>Chapter 5</i>	<i>No Relief</i> . . . . .	67
<i>Chapter 6</i>	<i>Across the Religious Divide</i> . . . . .	81
<i>Chapter 7</i>	<i>Fire Drill</i> . . . . .	93
<i>Chapter 8</i>	<i>Continuing Events</i> . . . . .	101
<i>Chapter 9</i>	<i>Return to the Classroom</i> . . . . .	109
<i>Chapter 10</i>	<i>A Parent's Protest</i> . . . . .	116
<i>Chapter 11</i>	<i>The Tawse in Use in my Home</i> . . . . .	125
<i>Chapter 12</i>	<i>The Case for the Re-introduction of Corporal Punishment in Schools</i> . . . . .	130
<i>Glossary of Scots Words contained in the Text</i>	. . . . .	142
<i>Appendix: Scottish Children's Rhyming Song</i>	. . . . .	143



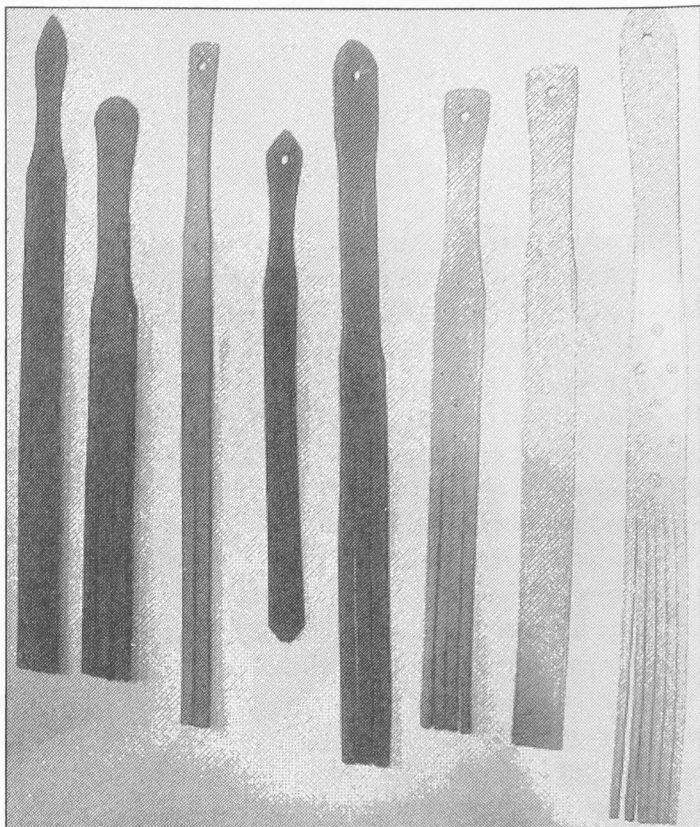
## FOREWORD

**A**FTER MANY years I have decided to set down some reminiscences of my life from my younger days when I was a matron at an approved school for girls not so very far from the city of Glasgow, and from the time I spent as a teacher in the school system in Scotland. I speak of a different age from the one in which we now live. One with far different social and moral values. I believe, while the wealth of today was not then evident and while many of the labour saving devices we now enjoy had yet to be invented, that period of time, the one which I grew up in and experienced during the earlier part of my life, was a far better one in many ways for society than that which we now enjoy. (A telling indictment of present times.) Certainly the world as I knew it then was a far happier place than the one I see now, whether viewed through my own experience or by other means offered by way of television and other electronic media. I do not condemn and totally laud the advances made through science and medicine from which we have all benefitted, but I speak of changes which have occurred within society with respect to our moral and social values.

Like many folk, I have very fond memories of my childhood. Families then being generally larger than today meant the streets were filled with children at play. In those days we did not have the benefit of video games. The games we enjoyed were played in the street and required a great deal of energy, which was very healthy for growing children. Additionally children played in groups across the age ranges and with a far greater degree of integration between the sexes than that seen today. Something which I feel was healthier for society. When we girls skipped rope, younger boys would participate without any stigma. However, they could never match the girls in skipping ability. I speak of the type of skipping which involved having a girl at either end of a fairly long rope while one or more children skipped in the middle. Occasionally two ropes were used at the same time requiring a very high degree of skill on the part of the participants.

One girl who lived on our street was very keen on football, and would play this game with the boys. She could dribble rings around all the boys and was not bad at scoring goals either. When street teams were picked for football she would invariably be among the first selected.

How many readers remember playing the following games during



*Various Scottish school tawses by different makers*  
*(None of these are by J. Dick)*

their childhood? Rounders, kick the can (a more complicated form of hide and seek), and peever, or beds. All of the games mentioned required little in the way of expensive equipment. A desire to have fun was all that was required, for the games could be played respectively with the following articles: a tennis ball and a broom handle or smooth branch of a tree, and jackets or pullovers placed on the ground to indicate bases, served for rounders. A simple empty food can was all that was required for kick the can. This was usually obtained from a neighbour's midden. All one needed to skip was a section of clothes line, and the game of beds required a smooth stone (occasionally a genuine peever would be used) and some chalk. However I have digressed.

The inspiration for my writing occurred one day when spring cleaning. For I rediscovered in a cupboard an item which I have not used for many years; my two-tailed Lochgelly tawse. How it brought the memories flooding back! And I admit I kept it to hand for inspiration during the writing of this book.

I have tried to provide through my writing a glimpse of an aspect of life which has all but disappeared from the western world in which we now live; that of very real discipline by way of corporal punishment given to children. It is sad to reflect on the behaviour of children today and to think how very different things were during earlier periods. And additionally how things might well have turned out to be very different for society today, and today's children, if we had not made some very foolish decisions and scrapped all corporal punishment of children (at least from the institutional perspective).

For those interested in glimpsing the past from an aspect which I think has been rarely covered before, I have written this book. For those Scots old enough to remember the time, and those who shared some of the experiences mentioned, I hope I can evoked some real nostalgia. I sincerely hope not all memories touched upon are the painful kind. For schooldays were the happiest days of our lives even if we did occasionally feel the sting of the tawse. If the cover illustration, title and subject matter hold your interest, then read on, for make no mistake, this is a story of the school strap. That very painful strip, of thick, hard leather which brought about improved behaviour in so many children.

As one who spent many years associated with this item I feel well qualified to discuss its merits. I make no bones about it, while I was teaching I frequently used the strap. I might add however my first introduction to the tawse was similar to that of many children, for as a schoolgirl I was several times on the receiving end of the strap. I only hope you are not disappointed by the story I have to tell.

For those readers of non-Scots heritage I have enclosed a glossary of Scots words used by me in this book.

Many words are used only once, and being unfamiliar with their exact meaning will not detract from the overall enjoyment of the book. However, because of the central theme of this book every reader should be familiar with the definition of the word "tawse", and other related words commonly used to describe a Scottish punishment strap.



## CHAPTER 1

### I CHOOSE A CAREER

THE YEAR was 1948. Having sat and passed my higher leaving certificate examinations at the girls senior secondary school which I attended in Glasgow, I had decided, rather than go on to university, to become a teacher. I had enrolled in teachers' training college, and in the following months had completed the required course to obtain my teaching certificate.

I came from a typical Scots family, with a dour but loving father, and sensible, no-nonsense mother. My two younger brothers were also typical of that period. Though they indulged in some of the usual school-boy antics they were generally well-behaved boys. I felt I was quite grown up at eighteen years of age, and with the rationing and frugality of the war years now coming to an end, I looked forward with some confidence to adult life, and my chosen career. A big decision lay ahead with respect to whom I should apply to for a teaching position, and though I had done well in my leaving examinations, obtaining my higher certificate in three subjects, with two additional lowers, I had no clear area of specialisation.

The first job applications posted by me proved unsuccessful. To date I had been unable to secure even an interview, so I decided to have a talk with one of my former teachers, and selected one who had perhaps most influenced me regarding my decision to teach.

Mrs. Morrison taught English and was an inspiring teacher, who had brought out the best in me. She had encouraged me to perform well beyond my own expectations for myself. It was her distinct interest in me which changed my attitude to school and learning. When I entered her realm of influence at thirteen years of age, I had been a fairly bright, but lazy pupil, who was content to get by with minimal personal application as long as I achieved an average mark, rather than trying to extend my own performance by doing my best. My lack of achievement was soon spotted by this astute teacher, and over the course of the following three years, she had driven me to success, by her encouragement and example.

As I reflect now, I am sorry to have to admit her initial reasoned appeals were rebuffed by me, resulting in a period of confrontation between us. I was usually a well-behaved girl, and no tough customer, but I was going through that difficult teenage period, where I thought

that I could better her. Looking back, I had become a bit of a smart Alec, and prone to answer back. Though I thought this impressed some of my friends, it did little to enhance my standing with my teachers. I very foolishly engaged Mrs. Morrison one day in just such an exchange, and the last words spoken by me constituted outright defiance.

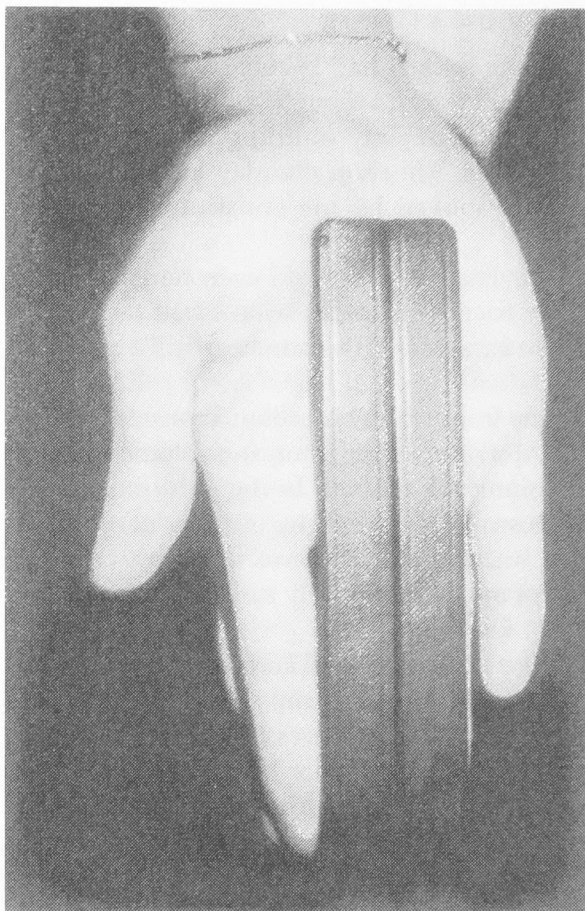
The words had escaped my lips before I could even remotely consider their consequences. My friends gasped at what I had said and I could scarcely believe my own ears. Mrs. Morrison heard all and reacted swiftly.

"McKenzie, come out to the front of this classroom at once! At once, girl! Do you hear me!" Mrs. Morrison's rising tone and volume of voice throughout the preceding commands told all. In the girls' senior secondary I attended we were usually addressed by our first names and seldom by our surnames in such a manner. I was in deep trouble. I fully realised the foolishness of my comment. My stomach churned for I knew what would inevitably follow.

I had not been strapped since primary school and unlike some of my friends, I really feared "the leather." I made my way down the passageway between two rows of desks and the eyes of all my classmates were upon me. By the time I reached the floor of the classroom my teacher had already opened her desk and had extracted her strap. It now lay coiled in her hands. When it had been fully uncoiled by her, like most pupils I was immediately drawn to look at it. I saw a sight which caused my heart to sink. For I saw a long black leather two-tailed strap, which was very evidently thicker than the tawses I had previously experienced in my primary school days, and which had then caused so much pain.

I also remembered a comment of one other girl in my school who had experienced this strap. She had received only one stroke, but she said, "Morrison's strap stings like the devil!" In our secondary school some of our teachers with younger pupils had less intimidating straps and some rarely used their strap and one or two teachers were not very proficient at giving the tawse. But by all accounts the foregoing did not apply to Mrs. Morrison. I felt I would not get off lightly. I noted the style, and although no expert myself on straps recognised this one as a "Lochgelly". I had not experienced one of these straps before, but from accounts of other less fortunate friends believed they really stung.

I quickly explored my options as I sought a way out of my predicament. No amount of pleading ever worked in these circumstances so that option did not enter my mind. Perhaps I could try an apology? I looked at the face of my teacher. The word "angry" does not even



*“Traditional crossed-hands fashion”: one hand supports the other and the strap falls lengthwise along the palms.*

*The strap is a Lochgelly Medium by J. Dick.*

begin to describe what I thought I saw etched on her face that day. No! That wouldn't work either! My big mouth had got me into this mess, best keep it shut and not make things any worse for myself.

She said nothing apart from issuing the command: “Cross your hands, you impudent girl!” I knew what that meant, and held out both hands with my arms straight to their full extent from my body at chest height with my fingers extended and palms uppermost. My left hand was on top of, and supported by, my right hand, in what was known as, the “traditional crossed-hands fashion.” I also knew this usually signalled more than one stroke of the strap would be given. This was no great surprise considering the gravity of my offence. I looked down at my soft feminine hands, and noted their very white pallor. They would not remain white for much longer!

The strap was quickly placed over her shoulder, and the first stroke fell. I was aware of the thwack and an awful pain, but at this very moment, I seemed to be outside my body, for I seemed to be in a stupor. I quickly changed hands when directed, and placed my right hand

on top of my left. The second stroke fell with a very loud thwack, and my mind and consciousness returned to the present circumstance. The pain I now felt in both hands was agony.

"Your left hand on top again, girl!" I was to experience more! How could I stand it? But what could I do to prevent it? My hands came back to the required position, and another stroke fell. This time I could not control myself, and bent over clutching my stricken palm. I also realised I had emitted a loud involuntary yell. The tears which had welled up in my eyes could no longer be controlled, and now appeared. I felt I had had more than enough, but her strap was over her shoulder again, and she was asking for my other hand.

My reluctance in bringing both hands into position caused her to come to my assistance, and using her free hand (not the one in which she held her strap), she lifted my hands to the required pose. While doing so my teacher looked directly into my eyes, and I am sure, through her quick glance, read my entire state of mind. This glance saved me, I think, from additional strokes, for afterwards I thought she probably intended giving me six or more of the best. However, she confined herself to four in total, although the last one was almost beyond belief. The loud sound of the tawse striking my palm seemed to reverberate around the classroom, and once again despite myself the tears now fairly flowed. I was told to return to my desk. As my teacher returned her strap to her desk, a very sorry young lady made her way back to her seat through a haze of tears. And by now an awful throbbing pain in both hands had started.

I had not ever experienced this degree of pain before from a strap and it lasted for the balance of the afternoon and well into the evening. I examined my hands and they were not a pretty sight. I wondered if they would ever be the same soft white hands again, but the terrible pain I felt overshadowed my other concerns. I thought I had previously experienced the worst a strap could do when I had been strapped at my primary school. Little did I realise before today, just what a heavy tawse could do, and what a "real strapping" was like.

After school in our toilets I very carefully did my best, with the assistance of two close friends, to conceal the evidence of the tears I had shed earlier. I did not want my parents, or my younger brothers, to learn of my tears. Both girls showed a great deal of sympathy for my plight, and despite the many questions they wanted to ask they both sensed I did not wish to speak of my ordeal. Needless to say, I said not a word to either of my parents about this. They would have shown no sympathy for me in any case had they heard what I had done. Mrs. Morrison had now resolved any conflict which existed between us. A

disagreement between pupil and teacher which involved the strap was one no pupil could ever hope to win.

The four strokes she inflicted that memorable day were the severest punishment I experienced during my schooldays, and caused me to reflect deeply as I struggled with the pain and tears. The strap was used in almost all Scottish schools, and almost every teacher had one. This fact was even celebrated in children's rhymes of the period, and I have detailed one from my memory in appendix 1. This particular rhyme, was sung during my early childhood, by myself and other children, while skipping rope, or playing peever.

I had seen the strap frequently used during my primary schooldays, when I attended classes comprising both boys and girls, but have to say boys were by far the more frequent recipients of the strap. I had only received it twice during my seven years in the primary grades, and had then found it very painful and I was very much afraid of it. At the girls' senior secondary school I attended it was used less often, although we girls all knew most teachers had a strap. Suffice to say, following that strapping, my attitude changed and in the following months and years I enjoyed the numerous challenges Mrs. Morrison set for me.

When I arrived at my former school it did seem odd not to be attired in the traditional uniform. It also seemed strange to be able to stroll the corridors without having to be wary of prowling teachers, and in due course I found Mrs. Morrison in her classroom enjoying a free period without pupils and catching up on her marking. We talked for a long time, during which Mrs. Morrison recognised my discouragement at my lack of success at finding a suitable position. However she suggested this in no way reflected on me or my qualifications but was merely a phenomenon of the current job market. In 1948 the post war baby boom had not yet taken effect with respect to school enrolment, and many male teachers who had been called up for active service during wartime had by now been demobbed, and had rejoined the profession.

Despite the raising of the school leaving age in Scotland in 1947 from 14 to 15 years of age, openings for new teachers in the school system in 1948 were at a premium, as were jobs generally, for unemployment following the war was very high. However Mrs. Morrison had noticed a job advertisement in a recent educational journal indicating a shortage of teachers for a special education environment. The job paid a premium over starting teachers' salaries, and required one to reside on the premises. She suggested that as I had no strong ties to prevent me from moving, and as I had expressed a willingness to leave home if necessary, I might like to pursue the matter further. Though this opening

might not be my ideal choice it would provide experience, and allow me to apply for future positions as an experienced teacher. I thanked her, and equipped with all the necessary information, wrote my letter of application.

The advertisement had given few details of the establishment or the type of positions which were available, and I assumed it might relate to the education of physically- or mentally-handicapped children. I was not sure if I could cope in such an environment, and it was with some trepidation and suspense that I awaited a reply.

When the letter arrived I was asked to attend at ten o'clock the following Monday for an interview, and though it contained no further information regarding the specific type of work I was none the less excited. My parents had asked exactly what the job was and where it was located, but I had to explain I knew as little as they did.

As this was my first job interview, I spent a long time trying to decide what to wear to set the correct image, and had to contend with unsolicited advice from my mother which only further confused me.

Having selected a simple navy skirt, set off by a crisp white blouse, thereby accommodating my mother's wishes, I decided on shoes with rather higher than usual heels to reflect my now adult standing. I was not yet comfortable with makeup, and so I avoided it altogether. I hoped my overall appearance would set the correct tone. I had been told by both my mother and father how important it was not to be late for the interview, and I set out in good time for my destination.

The interview was conducted by a Mr. Campbell, an older gentleman, who while not quite putting me at ease, seemed unconcerned by my youth and lack of experience. My qualifications impressed him, and he asked me a series of questions concerning my own schooling and home life, asking finally why I sought the type of position offered. This presented the opening I was looking for and I told him the advertisement had said little regarding the type of work. I asked him exactly what the position entailed, and where it was located. He responded that the opening was at an approved school located in a fairly rural area of central Scotland. I recognised the geographical location but I had to ask just what sort of school an approved school was.

"Why, a girls' borstal or reformatory" was his reply. This terminology I did recognise, and I tried to contain my surprise. I had not been expecting such an answer and knew very little about such establishments. I had to think quickly before he caught me further off-guard with additional questions. I was relieved when he said a Mrs. McEwan was waiting in the next office, and would be able to provide all the information I sought. He then escorted me to meet her.

Mrs. McEwan was a tall, plump, middle-aged woman, who greeted me in a very friendly manner, but whose demeanour and personality indicated she would stand no nonsense. She seemed far more imposing than any teacher I had previously known. She was in charge of the approved school, and the interview covered a wide range of topics. My head was in a whirl, trying to cope with the mountain of information she presented. The institution housed girls between the ages of eleven and sixteen years of age, and I would be required to teach across a range of ages and subjects, and also to assist in the day to day running and routine of the establishment, which meant residing on the premises.

As the interview progressed, Mrs McEwan provided more and more information on institutional life and I became enamoured by the prospect of teaching in just such an establishment. The responsibilities of the job, and also the freedom and excitement which it offered greatly appealed to me. Living away from home also held a certain appeal, and before the interview ended I decided this was the job for me.

Before concluding, Mrs. McEwan asked me about my experience and attitude to corporal punishment. Though this topic had been covered during teachers' training, I had not paid particular attention to this subject, either during the lecture or the discussion which followed. The lecturer had exhibited a strap but without a "willing victim" he had not demonstrated its use. The theme of the lecture centred more around the need to maintain classroom discipline and the rationale and psychology for using the strap rather than the mechanics of giving the strap. Little additional information, beyond the name and address of certain suppliers, was given with respect to the different types of straps available for school use. As I had yet to obtain a teaching position I had paid little attention to this last piece of information. I would acquire a strap when the time came that I needed one.

I knew how discipline had been maintained during my own school days, and while not thinking much about it, had no reservations about using the strap myself when required. I well remembered my own few experiences of getting it and the beneficial effect it had on me and other schoolchildren, and had mentally resolved to use it when necessary. I communicated my thoughts to Mrs. McEwan, who seemed well satisfied by my reply. Before leaving, I tentatively agreed to take the job on the condition my parents did not object.

That evening I outlined everything to both my mother and father, and although my parents were surprised by my decision to accept such a position, I received their somewhat reluctant blessing.

## CHAPTER 2

### APPROVED SCHOOL LIFE

**I** SET OFF later that month to commence my first job, and had packed almost my entire existing adult wardrobe. New clothes would be a priority after receiving my first pay.

I was met at the train station and escorted by car by a young teacher named Morag McKay to the establishment, which lay just outside the town. I later learned this was standard practice due to the security involved in entering the premises. Morag and I talked on the way, and she explained she had been at the school for two years, having taught for two years previously at a junior secondary school. She had adjusted quite well to the change, and had settled in quickly to the routine. She was happy with the job and the way of life. Morag told me it would be important to settle in quickly, and to establish myself within the institution. She further told me not to stand for any nonsense from any of the girls, particularly during my training period, otherwise the girls could make life very difficult.

Before I knew it we were at the premises and inside the gate. I had little time to absorb the surroundings, as Morag escorted me straight to my living quarters, which consisted of a single simply furnished room, serving as both as bedroom and private quarters. The bathroom was down the corridor, and was shared by three other matrons. I left my suitcase unpacked, and was then taken to report to Mrs. McEwan.

Morag knocked on the door to announce our arrival, and quickly withdrew following some conversation. She left me sitting outside the head's study, but before departing for her other duties, Morag told me our "Head Matron" was dealing with a girl on report, and would be with me shortly.

I tried not to eavesdrop, but I could not help overhearing Mrs. McEwan's voice, which was raised. At eighteen years of age, I sometimes felt less of an adult and still like a schoolgirl, and this was one of those times. On this occasion I must say I felt just like a schoolgirl, waiting to see her headmistress, and I could feel a certain queasiness in my stomach, as if I also was on report. I wanted to make a good impression with Mrs. McEwan and I was anxious not to make any silly or foolish statements during our impending conversation. I listened but could not hear the gist of what was being said, and the muffled voice



seemed to die away, but I sat bolt upright upon hearing the next sound. It was not a voice, and although muffled by the door, was very clearly a sound which I recognised from my schooldays. It was in no uncertain terms the sound of a school strap. I listened more intently, and heard a further succession of strokes fall. My heart pounded, and despite myself my emotions surged, as I also heard some muffled cries, and finally the sound of a girl crying. I had not counted the strokes of the punishment, but it seemed to me to go on for a very long time, and must have been at least six strokes or possibly more! The door eventually opened, and a very tearful girl, whom I guessed to be about fifteen years of age, left. Final warnings from Mrs. McEwan were issued regarding future behaviour, and I watched Sally Hogan depart in tears with punished hands tucked into armpits.

In an instant, I was greeted by Mrs. McEwan, and escorted into her spacious and well-appointed office. I took in the surroundings, which included a large desk, chairs for guests, a cosy fireplace, cupboards and a large window which afforded the best view of the surrounding countryside from the building. Notwithstanding the view from the window, my eyes were drawn to her desk. On it lay a leather two-tailed school strap, whose style I immediately recognised, but of dimensions I had not seen before. It was very long, and seemed much thicker than any strap I had seen during my school days. I could now well appreciate the reason for Sally Hogan's tears and distress! As Mrs. McEwan spoke to me, she picked up her strap and carefully coiled it by winding it round one hand with her other hand (something I had seen other teachers do) before returning the strap to the top drawer of her desk.

Mrs McEwan's conversation I remember to this day, even after all those years. It dealt with the necessity of immediately establishing my authority within the institution, and quickly coming to grasp with what was required of all matrons within the school. Mrs McEwan said that for the first month I would be on probation, and under the guidance of Morag McKay from whom I would learn all that was required. We then went on a tour of the entire building and grounds. The establishment was self-contained and consisted of classrooms, gymnasium, dining hall and kitchen, pupils' dormitories, pupils' bathrooms and some indoor and outside recreational areas for our inmates. In addition, there was, of course, living accommodation for the live-in staff, which consisted of teachers, or matrons like myself. Cooking, laundry and janitorial functions, were performed by non-teaching staff, who lived off the premises. Apart from the high exterior wall, and almost permanently locked gate, the premises were in many ways similar to schools of that

era, which had been constructed at the turn of the century. It was an entirely functional structure, and though it was decidedly cold in appearance it did not surprise or intimidate me. I found the school to be a bit of a maze, but was assured that by the week's end, I would know it inside out.

On returning to her office, Mrs. McEwan repeated that I would understudy Morag for the first month to learn the ropes. She then advised that I must quickly establish my authority over the girls, and said that the good order and running of the establishment required adherence by staff and girls to the rules and regulations laid out. She said any infractions of the rules should be swiftly and firmly dealt with, and the approved method of dealing with these, was corporal punishment. This could be quickly administered, causing the least amount of disruption, and was very, very, effective. Other methods of punishment were nowhere as effective and not employed at this school. Such things as a bread and water diet were harmful for a growing girl, and solitary confinement was deemed cruel and would interfere with the routine running of the establishment.

At this point she rose from her desk, and opened her large cupboard. Inside, hanging from hooks, were many new tawses, very carefully laid out, for they were arranged by length and weight. I also noticed several crook-handled school canes. I was surprised by such an "armoury". Being a Scot, I had not seen a punishment cane before, but instantly recognised it from the distinct shape of the crooked handle, and the location of the implement beside so many tawses. The school cane was used at very few establishments in Scotland, being confined to a handful of private schools in addition to the approved school.

Mrs. McEwan then selected not one, but four tawses for me. They varied in length and thickness, but all had come from the same manufacturer, John J. Dick of Lochgelly, Fife. The shortest and thinnest, was two-tailed, 21 inches long, and approximately  $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick, it was stamped with the letter M in the handle. The second was three-tailed and thicker, 24 inches in length, and stamped H. The third, two-tailed, heavier than the second, and 24 inches in length, was stamped XH; and the final one 28 inches long and  $\frac{1}{2}$ " thick. The first three straps closely resembled some I had seen while at school, but the last one seemed very much thicker and longer than any strap I had seen before.

I had never held a strap, and I picked up the three-tailed heavy-weight. I immediately felt that sense of power that one acquires when holding a symbol of authority. I marvelled at the feel, the smell of the new leather, its stiffness, and its weight. Mrs. McEwan suggested I use the lightest tawse for the younger girls, and the second and third tawses

for older girls. The first three tawses, she explained, were designed for regular school use. The last tawse was designated "reformatory grade," and was just that. Considered too severe for regular school use, it was only available to approved schools, and at this school used for more serious infractions.

Mrs. McEwan said it was normal practice to punish in class in the usual school manner on the hands. For more serious offences, girls could be punished on the hands, or the bare bottom, with the tawse, or across school knickers with the cane, and six was by no means the maximum number of strokes. She stated we were truly, "*in loco parentis*," and many offences committed by girls were dealt with by punishments beyond those administered in the traditional school system, resulting in a far greater degree of severity. She also stated that she had no hard or fast rules concerning punishment, but suggested that common sense should be applied regarding the degree of severity and choice of implement.

My mind was racing for though I had witnessed many strappings, and experienced a few myself, during my own schooldays, I was unsure about the finer points of administering the same. I wished at this moment I had paid a good deal more attention, and had asked a number of questions when this topic had been discussed during teachers' training. I also regretted not having raised this matter with my former teacher when I had recently spoken with her. For during our conversation she had raised the lid of her desk and her "infamous thick strap" had laid coiled in its usual position. Mrs. Morrison, from my one past painful personal experience, knew how to strap!

I quickly racked my brain for the correct words to use to ask Mrs. McEwan for more information on the topic, but before I could speak, she had read my mind, and she quickly said that Morag would give me appropriate instruction. I gathered up my tawses, and returned to my room where I spent the rest of the day unpacking.

When I had finished storing my clothes and other personal belongings, my attention turned to my new straps. Nothing symbolised a Scottish schoolteacher more than the tawse. Almost every teacher had one, and some more than one, and it was used in almost every school. Very few children indeed had not seen one, and the vast majority of pupils knew from first hand experience their sting. My mind returned to my own schooldays, which at that time were freshly imprinted on my mind. I thought hard in particular about the straps, and punishments, I had both witnessed and experienced, as I sought to recall some knowledge which might prove helpful to me, in learning how to use the strap.

During my schooldays, I recalled seeing many different straps, for the pattern and style was not standard. Although certain styles could be recognised, each strap seemed to be in itself unique. I had seen straps of light brown leather, and dark brown leather, and black leather; most two- or three-tailed but also one or two four-tailed; some were old, while others were new. Some were thicker than others, but some thinner straps could sting just as badly as thicker ones, although the pain generated generally lasted longer from a thick strap than from a thinner one. The one thing they all had in common was that they hurt!

Sometimes new teachers acquired a strap from their predecessor, so it did not always follow that a new teacher would have a new strap. The contrary position also occurred. Some teachers during their careers felt their current strap was not suitable for the age or type of pupils currently being taught, and then acquired a new one. When a teacher got a new strap, it was usually bad news for the pupils, for they usually obtained something more punitive than their former model!

Teachers usually kept their strap either inside their desk or coiled in a pocket. This would be a jacket pocket in the case of a man or over-all pocket for women teachers. Straps stored in desks were sometimes rolled or folded in two, and sometimes stored full length. Pupils were keen to see a new teacher's strap for the purpose of evaluating its potential punitive power. Many schoolchildren could tell just by looking at a strap whether it was a "really good one". i.e. one which could be very painful. Two key factors in evaluating any strap were length and thickness. However from my own recollections of my schooldays some straps just looked sinister, and when they did, they generally lived up to their appearance in their respective punishing power!

Some of my friends at school, particularly the older ones, knew a great deal about straps. They were the children who reluctantly travelled much more frequently than others to the front of the classroom for a taste of the leather. Some were strapped at least once during almost every year of their school life. Others went through bad spells where they might have several experiences of the strap from a number of teachers during the same school year. They well knew which teachers had tawses that "stung like hell", and all the small nuances of punishment. They also told stories to frighten those younger or less well-informed about various teachers' straps, and embellished the size of each and the relative pain each could inflict. However not all school tales were without substance. Our headmistress at primary school had a much feared strap, and although I never saw it, let alone felt it, few were able to stand it without the shedding of a tear or two.

I had heard the word "Lochgelly" while at school and knew this represented a very popular and painful make of tawse. The strapping I had experienced from Mrs. Morrison had come from an old and very serviceable two-tailed, black leather Lochgelly, and as I previously stated had been very painful, causing not just the standard hot, sore hand for an hour or so but a pain which lasted for me for the balance of the school afternoon and well into the evening. The terrible throbbing had died away after two hours but a very deep and lasting pain had subsisted. Previously when I had been strapped I had experienced only one stroke and on just one occasion two strokes, given as one per hand. The resultant pain from two on each hand delivered by a very irate teacher at the end of her tether with respect to me had not previously been experienced by me, and I found it a very memorable experience, though for very unpleasant reasons!

Thus prompted I examined my new straps in great detail and although I had already identified them all as "Lochgellies", I measured them with a ruler. Based upon the results of my measurement, I have been able to provide detail of the straps I used during my career. By my reckoning the XH model and the "reformatory grade" strap were both thicker than any I had ever seen during my own schooldays, and I was anxious to know their true dimensions. Some classmates had spoken of teachers having half-inch thick straps but based upon my measurement of my new tawses I now knew this to be an exaggeration. None of my classmates had ever experienced a strap half an inch thick! However Mrs. Morrison's tawse would have been at least as thick as my present three-tailer. Given the circumstance and type of girl in our care such straps as I now possessed I felt would be not only warranted but necessary!

I lay on my bed recalling many school memories and quickly drifted from my original thoughts of straps and punishments to much happier recollections of fun I had shared with my school chums.

That evening I accompanied Morag to dinner, and found both staff and inmates dined in the same large hall. The pupils were seated at long tables and arranged by form level, the younger pupils being closer to the front of the room, where the head table, which the staff occupied, was located. At this point, I was introduced to some of my colleagues, who were seated for dinner. There were ten of us, all women ranging in age, and I was, not surprisingly, the youngest. I also noticed a matron standing at the back of the dining hall, whose job it was to supervise. She stood beside a lectern, and I noticed a heavy leather school strap rested thereon. The girls were very respectful and well-behaved, and the meal was taken, by the girls in silence, or if talking,

girls spoke in very low tones, similar to whispers. During that first evening some mild rebukes were all that issued from the supervisor.

Following dinner, Morag returned with me to my room, and we sat and chatted. I had already unpacked and stored all my own belongings, but had been unsure of what to do with my newly-acquired straps. They lay in full view on top of a small desk in my room.

This prompted Morag to exclaim, "I see Mrs. McEwan has supplied your straps. I presume you do not have any experience of using a strap?"

"No, I don't," I replied.

"Well, it's important you learn very quickly! I could not imagine what life in this place would be like without the tawse." And with that remark from Morag my education in learning how to use the strap commenced.

Morag had me pick up the two-tailed XH, and proceeded to outline in detail exactly how to strap. She commenced with how to hold the strap by taking a comfortable grip of the handle; how the strap should be placed straight back over the shoulder and not at an angle; the importance of keeping one's elbow against one's chest when delivering a stroke. She also advised the best height for a pupil's hands, namely chest height, and also how it was best to have a pupil cross their hands for punishment thus making it more difficult to draw hands away prior to, or during, the delivery of a stroke. She also said I should be careful to allow sufficient distance between myself and the pupil to allow for my arm's length, and also the length of the strap being used. This helped avoid striking a pupil's wrists with the strap. If this occurred it tended to leave bruises which were very painful and unsightly. They also lasted for several days. Morag stated a properly delivered stroke from a strap given while facing a pupil should contact a full portion of the palm and fingers up to but excluding the wrist.

She then had me take a number of swings with the strap, to emulate a stroke, and provided helpful criticism. I was unsure just how much effort one should put into a stroke. I did vaguely recall when I was a pupil that one could tell by a teacher's attitude whether one was likely to get a hard or just an average stroke, but I could not remember any further useful information as to how a stroke was best delivered. Once or twice I did put too much force in my swings, and Morag told me to relax, and use slightly less effort while still following through, and she calmly said, "Let the weight of the strap, do the job for you". She told me I should practice during my spare time by aiming for a particular spot on my mattress.

"Let me give you one further piece of advice, Mary!" said Morag.

“Threats alone at this school don’t work, and if not followed through on can actually be detrimental to discipline. When your strap comes out of the desk, use it!”

Before leaving, Morag asked about my own experience of receiving corporal punishment, and when I revealed how limited it had been, she said it might also be useful if she now gave me a small reminder. I recalled how painful I had found my few past experiences, and did not wish any reminders, but I could not find appropriate words to decline quickly enough, and so deferred to her authority.

“Mary, hold out your hand.”

I raised my left hand and supported it with my right, in the traditional crossed hands pose. I noticed she had selected a strap, and felt somewhat annoyed, the strap she had chosen, was not the lightest model. The two-tailed XH was now over her shoulder, and very soon swished down upon my palm. The thwack and the awful intense pain, seemed to arrive simultaneously. It was worse than I remembered, and though I did not let out any sound, my face screwed up in agony. She had not appeared to use any effort, but the stroke had been real. I had not been expecting this and had not experienced a strap of such weight before and the single stroke really hurt! This lady was right at the top of the tree with my former teacher, Mrs. Morrison, in her strapping ability! I would always remember the first stroke delivered by my new tawse!

Before I could “thank my tormentor,” she left saying, she would call for me in the morning at half past seven. I looked at my hand after she had gone, and noticed the usual redness and possible slight swelling, and also the faint imprint of two tails. Any further interest I had that night in straps departed, and I soon found myself turning in for an early night, although falling asleep was not so simple. Was it just the strange bed, or did the painful throbbing in my left hand have something to do with it?

My alarm woke me at seven, and I quickly bathed and dressed before Morag’s arrival at my room. I did not have a large wardrobe of clothes to choose from, but decided to look as mature as possible to distance myself in appearance from the pupils. I had chosen a pretty but practical dress, coupled with new stockings. Matrons wore a white overall over their other clothes but I had “yet to earn my colours”. The girls were dressed in traditional gymslips, grey in colour, rather than the more usual navy-coloured ones, and only the most senior girls wore stockings, which were rather coarse in nature, unlike my fully-fashioned seamed nylons. I would later learn the distinct grey uniform,

served a purpose in the event any of our charges absconded. They were more easily traced within the small rural community. All the local schoolgirls wore a uniform which was navy in colour. The local bus conductors knew not to accept any of our girls as passengers, unless accompanied by a staff member, as did the staff of the local railway station.

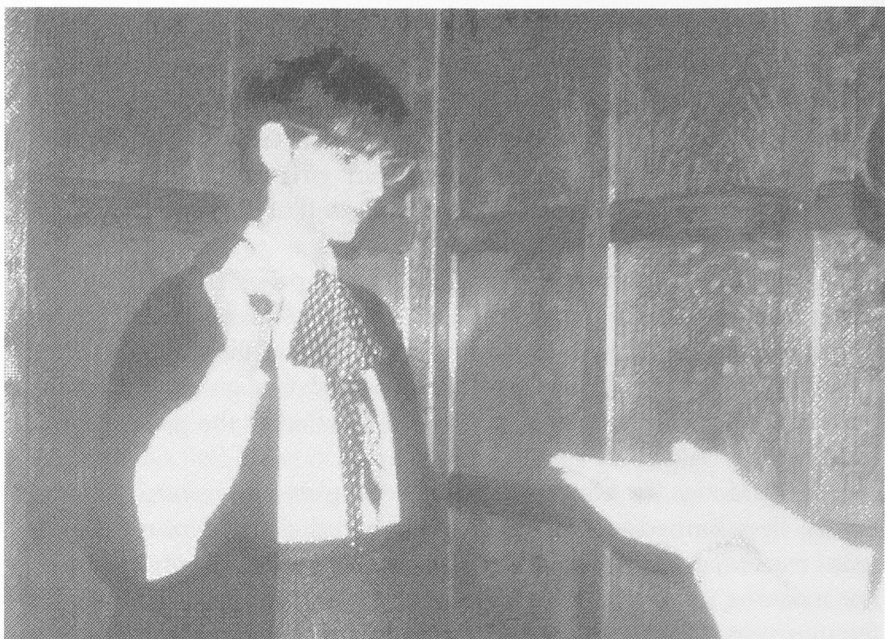
Before Morag appeared, I remembered the previous night's episode with the strap. This prompted me to look at my left hand. It appeared normal, just like my right, with no redness or swelling, but was I still feeling pain, or was it just my imagination? On greeting Morag, I quickly put it from my mind, and we proceeded to the girls' dormitories.

It was practice for a matron to wake the girls each morning, and to ensure they bathed and dressed quickly, and also to ensure no nonsense ensued, or fights broke out, during this period. As some of us are not morning people, many girls could be very fractious, or difficult in the morning. During this period, not only were the girls supervised, but the dormitories were inspected for cleanliness and tidiness, and beds were also checked to ensure none of the younger girls had a problem with bed-wetting. We seldom encountered this, but unlike many other institutions, our staff took a very sympathetic approach to any such occurrences, and we did not punish any girl so afflicted. However if a problem in this area was detected, the girl in question was required to don orange-coloured heavy rubber knickers under her pyjama bottoms each night to prevent the soiling of sheets and mattress until she was cured. Additionally these garments would be washed out each morning and hung to dry. Since all the other girls in the dormitory would know of this precaution, invariably many of them would tease the girl in question quite unmercifully, so it could be very difficult and embarrassing for a younger girl.

The girls quickly recognised I was a newcomer, but Morag's presence ensured no disrespect was shown toward me. When all were washed, dressed and ready, the girls quickly assembled and proceeded to the dining hall. After ensuring they were all seated, Morag and I retired to the mistress's table to eat breakfast. Moira Adams stood at the foot of the hall, supervising the girls. Again, I noticed a leather strap prominently displayed on the lectern. No misbehaviour took place during breakfast, and we were soon on our way to class.

Morag taught both English and Mathematics across the age range, and the first class of the day comprised some of the youngest girls. I was surprised that girls so young should be in such an establishment. Morag assured me they were all there for good reasons and not to trust





any of them. I was introduced to the class by Morag and they showed no special interest in me. I spent all of that first day watching and listening, and absorbing as much as I could, not of the information which was conveyed to the pupils, but of Morag's teaching style and manner. It seemed to me even small nuances conveyed much, and helped immensely at maintaining classroom discipline. It was not until after the final lesson ended that I realised I had not brought any of my straps to the classroom, and I mentioned as much to Morag. The entire day in the classroom, had progressed without any sign or mention of a strap, and while I found this in itself not unnatural, I was unsure whether I should bring my own strap(s) to class. Morag assured me it was not necessary, and confirmed this by raising her desk lid and producing two coiled two-tailed straps, just like mine. Morag explained them as "a medium weight for younger girls and a heavier strap for those older."

I spent that evening preparing some lessons of my own for later in the week and wrote my first letter home telling my parents not to worry and that I was settling in nicely. I was just getting to know other staff members but generally found them all to be pleasant, friendly and helpful. Helen Simpson was a registered nurse and in addition to some other non-teaching duties looked after any minor ailments for staff and pupils. I was not yet completely familiar with the entire routine of the establishment, and with the exception of what I had heard outside Mrs. McEwan's office on my arrival, I had yet to witness a punishment, other than my own at Morag's hands.



*Classic positions for the use of the tawse. The strap is placed over the mistress's shoulder; the pupil's hands are crossed. The strap is brought lengthwise onto the palm.*

Thursday arrived and things changed. I conducted four classes with younger girls and I revelled in my new authority. I thoroughly enjoyed many aspects of the job and while still under Morag's watchful eye found the day flew by. With classes ended, I was bold enough to solicit criticism from Morag and found she had nothing but praise for my performance.

Dinner time arrived. I had no sooner seated myself at the table, when I heard the voice of the matron responsible for supervision of girls during meals.

"Mary McFaul and Jean Simmons come over here!"

Angela Bradley was in charge and her tone immediately indicated to me that the girls were in trouble. I was all ears and strained to catch the gist of the conversation. Any excuses offered were quickly rejected. I watched as Angela uncoiled a very thick school strap which she had taken from her overall pocket. I was to have a practical demonstration and wished to miss nothing before I might be called upon to do likewise.

"Mary McFaul; cross your hands!"

The tawse rested over Angela's shoulder. She swiftly brought it down on the girl's hand and a loud thwack rang out. Although I was no stranger to this noise, it was a sound with which I would become very much more familiar. The strap rose and fell again on the same hand with the same loud thwack! Hands were changed, and a further two strokes were administered to the girl, but apart from some gyrations after the final stroke, she appeared to take them well and without

a sound. I was surprised! I was not at all sure, remembering my own school experience and what I had recently suffered at Morag's hands, that I could have shown the same fortitude. The second girl was not so brave, and while experiencing similar treatment became quite noisy after the second stroke and loud cries accompanied the loud cracks of the tawse. The scene enacted had a distinct affect on the assembled diners and the meal that followed was eaten in almost total silence from the girls.

The weekend brought some free time and I was happy to explore the local town. Window-shopping carefully, I selected new clothes which I was eager to acquire. I also enjoyed "escaping" from the approved school. At times I did feel as though I also was incarcerated in this establishment. The girls also enjoyed free time at the weekends, but on no account were they allowed to leave the grounds. Though much was done to run the establishment along lines similar to those of a strict foster home it should be remembered this was a borstal and as such it came under the charge of the Scottish Home Office via a branch of the prison system and our girls were all incarcerated for good reason and expected to remain in custody. Much of a girl's time at the weekends was spent in sporting activities and cleaning and tidying her dormitory. Older girls also had homework to complete. I was pleased, despite the class of girl generally within this establishment, that it was our policy to provide the best available education and support to all girls thereby trying to ensure the best possible start for them when they were released.

During my second week, I took a class which comprised some fifteen year olds. Morag had ensured I was coping well before leaving the classroom, which she did merely for a moment. It was just what some of the tougher customers had been waiting for and now the restlessness started among some pupils. I told the class to settle down but two girls paid little or no attention to my remarks and continued with their own private conversation. As my authority was being undermined, I had to act immediately or lose it.

"Kelly Stapleton and Joan Fisher, did you hear me?"

I was greeted by surly stares and their conversation continued. I settled on my course of action.

"Both of you come out here this instant!"

The door opened and Morag entered. I was not sure if she had witnessed what had transpired and I proceeded to tell of the infraction, but she very quickly acknowledged having seen enough and confirmed my choice of action as the appropriate one. During my time spent with Morag I had not seen her use a tawse on any of the girls. Though my

mind was in a whirl as to what I must do next, I hoped she would not usurp my power at this moment by deciding to punish the girls herself.

I quickly moved to the desk and raising the lid selected the heavier coiled strap. The fate of these girls was quite literally now in my hands. I used both hands and swiftly uncoiled the strap. The leather of this thick extra-heavyweight was more supple than my own but felt just right. I have found I always feel more at ease with a thicker strap. I had done a fair amount of practice since acquiring my own straps and had gained all that could be learned by this and from watching others using the strap. Now it was time to show my own worth. I was particularly concerned that I perform adequately in this regard and not be perceived by any girl as a soft touch.

I was not at all sure whether I wanted Morag to witness my first experience of giving the strap lest I should not cope very well but I finally decided her presence would be beneficial; she would at least ensure there were no further antics from my two victims. I decided to take Kelly Stapleton first and managed to compose myself. I was not rushing things, although much danced in my head. I suddenly realised I had not decided how many strokes to give and before commencing I thought I should give this some fast consideration. While doing so I glanced at Morag. It was as though she had read my mind, and I saw her holding up four fingers. I approached Kelly with the strap.

"Cross your hands, girl," I commanded.

She did as she was bid, and I gauged the distance to her hands very carefully. I then raised the strap, letting it fall behind my back. I had taken a grip by the very end of the handle and knew I was capable of a good swing. I drew the strap with a fair amount of power and force and heard a satisfying thwack as it contacted both the fingers and palm of the top hand. I also knew, from what I felt as the strap made contact, that I had struck well. The look on Kelly's face confirmed my thoughts. I raised the strap and struck again. Another sound stroke.

"Change hands," I commanded.

Whether the girl's movement in changing hands or my overconfidence was responsible I do not recall but my third stroke was less than satisfactory, merely grazing the outside of her palm. I steadied myself and resolved to make the last one memorable. It was. The girl let out a positive screech and reeled back clutching her hand.

I now moved to the second girl. Having found my stride the next four strokes were easier to apply. Joan Fisher looked somewhat nervous even before the first stroke descended and was decidedly more noisy. Her moans accompanied every stroke and I again drew a positive screech with the last. I noticed both girls now stood blowing on cupped

hands and vigorously shook their hands and I reflected I had witnessed this same reaction from many of my classmates following a strapping during my own schooldays. The reaction of children to the tawse has been similar throughout generations and was not learned or contrived, but entirely natural. Before I could think of what I wished to say next, Morag commenced to address the whole class.

"I trust all of you paid attention to what has just transpired. Do not think for one moment you can take advantage of any staff member here."

Then to the girls I had just punished, she said:

"You two will report here to this room at four o'clock today when I will deal with you."

The two reprobates looked far from happy at that remark and before either could challenge the fairness of the decision, Morag said:

"I am in charge of this class in case you have forgotten and I will not tolerate such behaviour in my classroom."

Any chance for appeal was now lost and the pair trooped dolefully back to their desks. I recoiled the strap and returned it to Morag's desk. I was secretly pleased with myself. I could strap! Soon other girls and staff members would know it. The rest of the class passed quickly and without further incident.

Four o'clock soon rolled around and I wondered just what punishment Morag would bestow on the two unfortunates. The girls arrived as I prepared to leave but Morag asked me to stay to witness proceedings. Without further ado and without further lecture Morag opened the desk, removed the same tawse I had used, and repeated the dose for both girls. Their reaction was similar to that displayed during my own administrations earlier that day and while neither cried by the end of proceedings both were not far from tears. I cast my mind back to a certain Monday night and fully appreciated their lot. I now understood why Morag had demonstrated her awesome style on me. If one was going to use the strap, it was important to know and remember just how it felt.

Girls were required to go to bed at varying hours according to their ages and after lights out in each dormitory it was expected that silence should reign and no girl could leave her bed except to use the bathroom. Each mistress in turn did night duty and the third week of my first month Morag and myself stood night duty. This required being on duty all night till relieved at seven the following morning and while on night duty one was not required to teach and was allowed to sleep during the day. I was not fond of night duty and found it quite boring. The basic requirement was to ensure the premises were secured so no one

could escape and to conduct night rounds inspecting the dormitories as the girls slept. Morag had suggested I try to get some sleep before commencing my first evening stint, and I still felt drowsy when she called for me prior to our both reporting for duty. When she arrived at my room I noticed she carried a strap and she suggested I bring a "Lochgelly" with me. I opened my cupboard and selected my three-tailed heavyweight. I discovered this was standard procedure for all mistresses on night duty as it created less disturbance to have a strap to hand rather than having to fetch one. I also found out during my third evening that a strap could be required.

Morag was first to hear the strange noise and alerted me. Looking at my watch I saw it was 11.30 p.m., a time when all residents other than ourselves should have been asleep. Morag very quietly left the duty room and slipped along the corridor. I followed. Something felt not quite right. We climbed the stairs very quickly to the first floor level containing the girls' dormitories and navigated the length of the corridor until we reached a dormitory holding some of our thirteen year olds. The door was partly ajar, and an eerie glow emanated from the room which seemed to be caused by torchlight. Morag entered quickly and turned on a light. Six girls from a total of twenty were out of bed and enjoying biscuits which had been stolen from the pantry. A quick check revealed twelve girls in bed asleep which left two missing. With the lights extinguished we waited and in due course two girls did return with more pilfered articles from the pantry. Lengthy lectures were not required. The girls had been caught red-handed and all knew they had misbehaved.

We took eight offenders to the duty room and Morag decided we should punish each on the bottom. Two chairs were strategically placed and the girls bent over them in two's while pyjama bottoms were lowered. Six smart strokes were applied to each bare bottom in turn as both Morag and myself operated simultaneously. This was a new experience for me, and while posing no problems with regard to the mechanics of it; I was a little unsure just how to proceed; never having witnessed or experienced this type of punishment in my life. I vaguely recalled seeing my mother spank both of my younger brothers by hand when they were much younger and I presume she may have also disciplined me in a similar manner when I had been a very young girl, but I honestly had little recollection of such events.

I consciously used less force on the first girl with whom I dealt than I would have used for a hand strapping, being unsure of the result of hard strokes to a girl's tender bottom. Morag however noticed this and said, "That's not fine china, lay it on!" I did and the girls knew it! The

maturing bottom cheeks of a bent over teenager's bare seat presented a very inviting target. One which you could not miss with a tawse. The three tails of my tawse contacted a very large portion of her bottom at every stroke and the signature left by the tails was very evident on the cheeks of each girl with whom I dealt that night. I passed my hand over the seat of my final victim when I finished dealing with her and was not surprised by the amount of heat emanating from her bottom. In addition to the pain many girls felt embarrassment at being in such an unladylike pose and this added a shame element to the punishment. It was unavoidable for the tawse must be given to bare flesh to have an impact. All girls massaged their tender, sore cheeks while some coped with a tear or two. The two ringleaders who had broken into the pantry were advised that since they had damaged the pantry lock and kitchen door they would also be on report and would face additional discipline.

The girls, some of whom were weeping, were marched back to bed and we ensured the dormitory was secured for the night before I tackled Morag regarding her decision to punish the girls on the bottom. She stated since the offence had occurred outside school hours she felt it beneficial to smack bottoms. She also stated that by punishing bottoms, the pupils' hands would not be marked with weals thereby allowing hand punishments to be given if required during school hours. She added that the two girls on report would probably be punished by Mrs. McEwan the following day on the hands.

Never having experienced such punishment myself I wondered how it must have felt for the girls for each bottom looked very red and sore. I felt my own hands surreptitiously slide from my hips and instinctively cup my own seat but realising my actions I quickly drew them away. I was very careful not to reveal my thoughts to Morag. Knowing her teaching methods and her desire to ensure I fully understood my job, I felt she might readily give my bare bottom a practical demonstration to teach me exactly what a tawse on the bottom felt like!

I asked Morag what the girls might expect to receive from Mrs. McEwan for being on report and she replied:

"Do you recall the reformatory grade strap you have in your cupboard?"

I answered in the affirmative.

"Mrs. McEwan uses one of those to the exclusion of all other types of strap."

I said to Morag I thought the biscuit episode to be more of a childish prank than a serious breach of rules and that the incident was not

without humour; but she cautioned against any leniency for the girls. She told me that their actions could easily have caused other girls to lose sleep or encouraged a fight to break out in the dormitory between girls enjoying biscuits and those who had none. This was in Morag's view the greater crime. I never did learn just what punishment befell those two girls at Mrs. McEwan's hands.

The perimeter wall of our establishment was high and enclosed a traditional school playground consisting of a flat concrete surface. The girls were allowed in the playground during school breaks each day. They were summoned back to class in the usual manner by the ringing of a bell and had to form up in lines which always annoyed the older pupils. One of our staff was designated to keep an eye on the girls during this break and to supervise their return to class. Needless to say just like schools everywhere some disturbances would occur in the playground from time to time. I might add they were dealt with in the traditional manner and girls sometimes returned a little late to class with warm fingers and palms as a result of a strapping, following some playground misadventure.

At weekends the girls were allowed supervised access to our playing fields at the rear of the premises, and sport and other outdoor activities were encouraged by the staff as a healthy outlet for a girl's energies.

The senior trustees were very helpful at these times and did most of the supervising. The trustees walked a fine line and reported any girl who seriously misbehaved for punishment. Failure to do so would have jeopardised their position and would also have led to corporal punishment for the trustee herself.

I was delighted when my probationary period under Morag ended and I could conduct classes on my own.

I wore the white overall signifying my position as a fully-fledged member of staff proudly. Mrs. McEwan had expressed her satisfaction with my progress to date, and asked me to keep up the good work. Morag was pleased with my performance as well and assured me I would manage very well on my own.

"If you do need any further help or advice you just have to ask" was her final comment and with that I entered my new classroom.

I had been assigned my own room and carefully arranged its contents to suit my needs. I made sure it contained all the equipment I thought necessary, including two straps. I had taken both two-tailed straps from my wardrobe and placed them inside my desk. Unlike many teachers I had not rolled or folded my straps to store them in my desk. By placing them diagonally I found the high desk would accommodate both full length. This action I felt preserved the newness or



stiffness of my straps and although I did not realise it at the time I think this contributed to the overall degree of pain of each, particularly my XH.

Some of my colleagues carried a strap coiled in their overall pocket ready for immediate use. However I felt this to be unnecessary. Given our location and circumstances a strap was always relatively close to hand when required. My three-tailed strap and my heaviest tawse now hung behind my bedroom door ready to be collected when required. I had not used a strap often during my first month but nonetheless had acquitted myself well when called upon to do so. I never doubted the results that could be achieved by corporal punishment properly applied, having witnessed so much during my own schooldays and I was a confirmed believer in its use.

My first day's teaching on my own was exciting but also brought the experience of having to punish two of our younger pupils. I was surprised that I should have my authority challenged by those so young but reflected that during my probationary period these girls had not seen me use a strap, and probably felt I would be slow to anger. They were wrong! I had set the class some arithmetic problems and had left the classroom briefly. Despite my warning regarding class conduct before I departed, I heard a fair amount of noise as I returned to my classroom. This immediately ceased on my re-entry, but I felt annoyed. I was worried that the noise may have been heard by my colleagues in other classrooms and I was at this stage very concerned about my image among my peers. It was difficult to single out those responsible for the noise but two girls were out of their seats and were thus easily identified.

"Jean Brown and Isobel Watson, come out here at once! Did you pay any attention to what I said before leaving this room?"

There was no answer.

Two crestfallen but arrogant eleven year olds trooped to the front. I opened my desk and produced my two-tailed medium weight strap. I wanted to set an example, but to date had not used this lighter strap. I was therefore a little less familiar with this strap and its punitive effect. After having told the first girl to cross her hands, I got her to change them following every stroke. I felt an air of uncertainty would heightened the drama of what was unfolding and have a stronger effect on the rest of the class. I placed the strap on her palm to gauge distance as this strap was shorter than my other models, then it was up and over my shoulder. I remember thinking about the girls being younger so I used less force while delivering my first stroke. The tawse still cracked home and Jean let out a yelp.

This surprised me as I did not expect her to make a noise after only one stroke. I deliberately used a lot less effort for the following three strokes and was satisfied with the end result, which included a tear or two. I had originally intended giving both girls six strokes, but now felt four would be quite adequate. The second delinquent was similarly despatched although I was a bit disappointed when she avoided crying. I intended producing tears in both girls as an example to the rest of the class but having given one girl four strokes could not in fairness proceed beyond that total with the second girl for the same offence. I had used a lot less effort than I originally intended particularly with the second delinquent and was now unsure whether the strokes I had given had had the full desired effect. The class however settled down and no further incidents occurred during the rest of that day.

I thought about my medium-weight strap and resolved to practice further with it. I even toyed with the idea of consulting Morag on this issue but felt she might choose to employ teaching methods of which I would not approve. I had no wish to experience the sting of a tawse delivered by Morag once more; even if it was only a medium weight.

I did however become more proficient in the course of time at using a medium weight strap. I found a slightly different technique was required. It generally required a flick of the wrist just prior to the stroke landing to deliver the maximum sting. I don't wish to deprecate thinner straps. They serve a useful purpose in the spectrum of disciplinary implements. Younger, smaller children and many schoolgirls found them to be quite punitive enough; but the pain can be fairly short lived, and passes off too quickly in my opinion. For our tougher customers who had all experienced such straps in school before arriving in our care a heavier tawse was required. Few girls if any could shrug off a good strapping from an extra heavyweight Lochgelly. Consequently, I often used my XH on younger girls although giving fewer strokes and with less effort on my part than I used with seniors.

The first example of this occurred in my class three weeks later, although on this occasion I did punish severely. Isobel Watson again offended in class. While her offence was no more serious than many others it did warrant the strap. I had noticed by observing her over the intervening period of time, that she seemed to hold me in contempt. I also overheard part of a conversation in which she told two other girls that the strapping I had given her had been nothing. She portrayed herself as tougher than her classmates and I suspect she had shrugged off my previous strapping and consequently had not experienced the full extent of my disapproval of her actions.

She was standing before me on the floor. I had not contrived this

particular situation, but I have to admit I was not going to let it pass, without making a statement. I had the full attention of every girl in the class and Isobel stood nonchalantly listening to my lecture regarding her behaviour. When it concluded I opened my desk and took out the XH strap. My actions were not lost on Isobel or some of the other girls in the class. While both straps in my desk were similar, in as much as both were two-tailed and identical in colour, the additional length and thickness of the extra heavyweight was apparent to many. I held the strap so Isobel could see its  $\frac{3}{8}$ " thickness and note the fact it was so stiff, the tails barely bent when held out straight by its handle. Isobel paled.

"Please miss."

"You have something to say, girl?"

"Please miss, that's the wrong strap!"

I decided to play along. "Wrong strap? This is my classroom, and my desk, girl, and I am fairly sure this is my strap. What do you mean wrong strap?"

"Please miss, that's the big girls' strap!"

"I decide which strap to use in this classroom girl, and if you have anything further to say on this matter, you will be talking to Mrs. McEwan!"

The atmosphere in the room seemed to be electrically charged now. My words were not lost on any of the audience. Isobel though young was certainly knowledgeable enough to realise the implications of a further challenge to my authority. She had demonstrated this by her comments concerning which strap I should, or should not, use. She had taken a gamble and lost, and she knew it. She also knew an encounter with Mrs McEwan would result in at least six strokes from an even more formidable strap and would end with extremely sore hands and undoubtedly for a girl of her age, in buckets of tears.

I had already decided how many strokes this girl should receive. In keeping with the psychology of my approach that was a number derived from her previous strapping at my hands. I thought to myself 'let's just see what you have to say to other girls about my strapping abilities after these four strokes.' To add to the drama I swished the tawse through the air before issuing the following instructions in a very serious tone.

"Hold out your hands, girl, and do not move them unless I tell you to."

I very slowly and deliberately placed the tawse over my shoulder and took my time lining up my first stroke.

I looked into the eyes of young Isobel and could see she was starting

to show fear. The first stroke fell and the volume of the sound was in keeping with the drama: it fairly cracked home. Isobel gasped and instinctively withdrew her hand.

"You are not paying attention to my instructions, girl. Raise your hand immediately!"

I again placed the tawse over my shoulder and patiently lined myself up. I drew the strap with force and the resultant loud thwack brought an equally loud aah! from Isobel and tears now clearly showed.

"Change hands, girl!"

I must confess I did experience some mixed emotion myself at this stage. Did it seem from her reaction so far that I had made my point? I decided to continue on course and administer the last two strokes at the same magnitude as my first two. Isobel's reaction to those strokes was what I had hoped for. She squealed for each one and wept loudly at the conclusion. I returned the XH to my desk, and placed the girl at a desk at the back of the classroom. I told her she need not participate further in this lesson but should reflect on her future conduct. The rest of that class passed off in almost total silence broken only by some sobs from Isobel, and every girl in that class knew from that moment on I meant business.

At dinner that evening Morag sat beside me and said, "You made a name for yourself today!"

I immediately thought of Isobel Watson and Morag confirmed that the news of my strapping of Isobel had been told to her by one of the other girls in that class. Morag had apparently asked why Isobel was in such distress. I quickly thought I might have overstepped the mark and momentarily wondered about the possible consequences my action might hold for me. However Morag said the "cheeky wee besom" had received exactly what she deserved and her behaviour had been leading toward that kind of a strapping for some time. I must say I was relieved to have my actions confirmed by an experienced staff member.

Word of that strapping may have spread but one should remember the nature of the environment in which we operated. These were not merely schoolgirls but young delinquents who had all offended against the criminal code in one way or another and had been placed in our care as an alternative to prison in deference to their age. Girls with time left to serve after reaching sixteen could be transferred to women's prison. Punishments were deservedly much harder than those incurred by children in regular schools and my punishment of Isobel was by no means unusual within this institution. It was important to keep firm control and offences which would perhaps have been overlooked in normal schools were not in approved schools. Each mistress kept firm

control in her class and all freely used the tawse. I feel sure Mrs. McEwan would not have accepted any so-called "enlightened behaviour" from any member of her staff. It would have placed a strain on every other matron to cover the shortfall in discipline.

A few of the older girls were permitted to wear a coarse form of stocking. This privilege was awarded to girls fifteen years of age and over on the basis of their good conduct. They assisted the staff in the running of the school in much the same way a prefect might operate within other schools. They were particularly helpful to us at weekends when our level of staffing would be reduced. Staff required free time; many returning to their homes on weekends. Those trusted girls were not excluded from corporal punishment, but it was expected girls in this privileged position would not require punishment of a serious nature. The prospect of losing status was enough to deter them from any serious misadventure.

Any infractions occurring at night could be dealt with on the spot by the night duty personnel or the offenders could be placed on report. The night staff were afforded complete freedom of choice in the matter. Any morning misbehaviour before arriving for breakfast was noted and girls were placed on report for it. I have already described how girls were supervised during meals and the strap was ever present at those times to deal with any incidents. Anything occurring during meals tended to be more trivial in nature and the constant presence of a strap served as a very real warning to girls. This coupled with its actual occasional use, when punishment was witnessed by all, kept good order in our mess. Classroom discipline was very much of the school variety. Serious misbehaviour during evenings or weekends meant a girl would be placed on report, and a duty matron would attend to such girls at eight o'clock each evening if required. Very often there would be no girls on report and, as I mentioned earlier, Mrs. McEwan liked to make her presence felt and kept her right arm in practice; and girls on report, or seriously misbehaving in class, were sometimes dealt with by her during school hours.

Girls placed on report were required to line up, outside a special room for punishment. The room had no windows. It was fairly small and contained only a staff desk and two chairs, a low vaulting horse with strategically placed straps on the legs, and a wall cupboard. The cupboard contained a selection of school canes, an official home office birch, and some spare tawses. Incidentally the birch was only used for formal punishments and permission had to be obtained from Mrs. McEwan prior to its use.

When dealing with girls on report, two senior trusted girls were also

present. They were required to obtain the names of all offenders due for punishment and to ensure that no girl was missing from the line-up which had to form up outside the room. Matrons used both the tawse and cane and one dear lady had a genuine French martinet. It was a very old and heavy example and was said to resemble the prison cat of nine tails, though in smaller form. One of our staff had seen a prison cat. This martinet had only six tails but they were very long of hard leather and each tail resembled those of a standard tawse regarding thickness. They were of course somewhat narrower than the tails of a tawse.

I failed to grasp what, if any, additional benefit was derived from such an instrument, but each to her own taste. The head allowed all of us some discretionary freedom in this matter; therefore in our establishment the use of such an implement was condoned (though I am not sure what would have been said by higher authority on this matter).

At the time I gave the issue of the martinet no further thought, though looking back now I wish I had made discreet enquiries. Had this item been used upon the matron in question when she had been a child? Was she intimately acquainted with its sting, and well aware of its qualities? Had it been brought back from France by a returning soldier after the Great War? Or had it merely been acquired by a parent during a brief visit to the Continent? Alas, dear reader, we can only speculate on the manner of its acquisition. This item however, represented the only deviation from our standard implements of punishment.

I tried a cane, and from time to time used one, but apart from the pride afforded me by being able to say I had mastered its use; I seldom had reason not to favour a tawse. The range of tawses available to us allowed us to inflict the desired degree of punishment commensurate with the seriousness of the offence which had been committed. I found a tawse just as punitive as a cane at the time of infliction of punishment but a tawse did not cause the same long lasting level of distress for a girl which a cane invariably did. (In my experience, days in the case of a cane versus hours for a tawse.)

My first turn on punishment duty came after I had completed my first month. Morag had informed Mrs. McEwan I now had enough experience in the area of corporal punishment to handle it and would be appropriately severe. I made my way to the room and carried both my non-classroom tawses. I was very interested in trying my heaviest tawse which I had not yet used. Like all new heavy tawses this strap was very stiff and stood out straight without the hint of a bend. I thought that given its thickness this tawse would never become supple.

That first evening three girls were on report. Two fourteen year olds had engaged in a fight before breakfast and one eleven year old had struck the physical education mistress. All waited in line outside the room and both trustees were also present. I entered the room and laid both of my tawses on the table. "Youngest first," I announced and Ann Orr brought in our young reprobate. "You struck Mrs. McGee during physical education this morning, what have you to say about that, Bridget Reilly?"

"I could nae help it, she would nae leave me alone because I could nae dae her stupid exercise." In later years I would sympathise with Bridget in her feelings toward Mrs. McGee. I felt she did sometimes get on one's nerves and sometimes I felt like hitting her myself! However at that time I was required to take a different view.

"Have you ever struck your teacher before?" I asked.

"No miss" she replied.

"I should hope not, and when I finish with you, I don't think you will ever do that again!"

"Drop your knickers and over the horse!" She slid them down, and stepped out of them. After she had bent across the horse her arms were fastened to the straps on the far legs of the horse, but because of her short stature the girl's legs hung free just slightly off the ground. I lifted her gymslip and found no other clothing which might interfere with the work of the strap. In deference to her age I selected my three-tailed lighter tawse but felt I should give ten strokes. I thought this would satisfy the offended party, and hoped Mrs. McGee would feel that justice had been done. Crack! Thwack! "Ah!" From the second stroke on, her yells accompanied my efforts with the tawse. Long before the conclusion tears were visible and she sobbed her heart out when it was over and she could replace her knickers.

"Don't let me see you before me in this room ever again," was my final admonition.

"Sheila McBride, step inside! Well, girl what was the fight all about this morning?" I asked.

"That Darlene McMaster stole my clean knickers, and would not give them back." I half-believed Sheila's story. I had found Darlene a handful in my class and I knew she tried to throw her weight around. "Well, right now girl you won't need any knickers. Drop the ones you are wearing and over that horse!" She did as I had instructed. This time I fastened the girl's arms and legs to the horse. I took the reformatory grade tawse and gauged my distance. I swished it down and the resultant thwack! in the small room was awesome. The girl yelled and I confined myself to only three more strokes of the same magnitude.

When she rose her eyes were damp and she very quietly withdrew. As Sheila left I heard Darlene say to her, "What have you been saying about me in there? Just you wait!"

"Darlene McMaster, get inside this room at once." I said. "I know all about your behaviour, girl, and you had best decide to mend your ways." I really did not wish to hear any more about whom the knickers belonged to and I told her so.

"Four strokes for fighting and four strokes for making threats!" I announced.

"That's no fair miss,... oh, please miss." The pleading had started. I was in no mood for it.

"Get your knickers down and over that horse at once, girl!" She dropped them, and did as she was bid, but before I commenced her punishment I looked inside the garment she had just stepped out of. Clearly labelled inside was the name "Sheila McBride". I did not let up and the strokes must have been very painful. She yelled from the very first one and was quite a different young madame by the time I finished with her.

That ended my first stint on punishment parade, and while invariably the punishments given at the parades were harsh, I felt they were justified. I was most impressed by the performance of the "reformatory grade tawse."

It really was awesome, and over the years few girls if any avoided tears when I used it. I gave between four and twelve strokes of the tawse to girls on report and laid them on very slowly, and very hard. Occasionally I used a cane, just to introduce an element of surprise, particularly if I had recently punished the same girl.

Many of my colleagues would ask to take over the duties for an evening, if they wanted to have the satisfaction of dealing with a particular girl they had placed on report. I never did. Though I understood the satisfaction to be gained from ensuring a girl got exactly what she deserved. I knew I would catch up with the naughtier ones sooner or later in my own classroom.



## CHAPTER 3

### MY SHOPPING EXPEDITION

On completion of my probationary period and with a month's salary in hand I arranged to go shopping on the first Saturday primarily for new clothes. The local town did not have a huge number of shops but it did contain a large ladies clothing store selling a range of items which were tastefully laid out in several departments. In 1948 rationing was still in effect with respect to clothing, but my wardrobe was quite meagre and in dire need of being supplemented. I had not purchased much in the way of new clothing since leaving school. Having gone on to teacher's training college, I had yet to earn any real money; so up to this time had little available for new clothes. Since I had purchased virtually nothing in the previous months, I did have a fair number of clothing coupons to my credit. I expressed interest in a number of items, and the assistant knowing a good sale was to be had, fairly fussed over me, the which I greatly enjoyed.

I tried on two dresses and mentally decided to buy both. I thought I looked good in them. Next I decided on a dark navy suit which was in keeping with the latest fashion which was towards a more form fitting style. In the changing room the skirt had been a bit of a squeeze and when I looked in the mirror I thought the style was very chic and suited me but the fit was less than perfect. I asked the assistant if I could try a slightly larger size but she said unfortunately it was the only size available in that style. She ventured a question and asked if I wore a foundation garment? I said I was not wearing one, and she quickly said "I think that would solve the problem. All the latest fashion styles require one these days, the smartest dressed women are all wearing one, and if you will give me your waist measurement I will get one from the corsetry department."

At this point I should explain I was when younger quite tall for my age, but my figure had been very thin. In fact until fifteen years of age my figure displayed little evidence of my sex and a thin boy would have shown as much shape in my gymslip as I did. After fifteen (perhaps because the war had ended and food was now available in larger quantities) my mother fed me well. I seemed to fill out all at once and while I enjoyed the rite of passage my first bra brought, my hips and seat seemed to have outdone my bust. While not fat or overweight I did

have at eighteen years of age what are politely called full hips. While I liked my curves, I was very conscious of the size of my bottom. Like all women I felt my figure was not perfect, and that I was rather over-endowed in this area.

The sales lady returned with a panelled girdle with six suspenders, and some light boning. She assured me this garment would provide firm control. It was the correct waist size and would now have to deal with my thirty seven inch hips. I retired to the changing room and after stepping into the garment, tugged it into place. I now fastened the side hooks and eyes and then pulled up the zip. It seemed to mould to my figure and though I had been a little apprehensive before I tried it on I now felt the benefits derived from such a garment. I quickly fastened my stockings to the suspenders and eagerly replaced the navy skirt. On stepping out of the changing room the reflection from the mirror was perfect and I must say I liked the new me and also the good feeling I acquired from wearing a girdle. It made me feel very mature. I was no longer a girl.

The sales lady noticed my approval and said "This is your first girdle, is it not?"

I nodded.

"You should really wear one all the time, and I suggest since you still have some coupons left you also get a second one." She noticed my expression and in explanation said "they last longer when alternated daily or weekly." I left the store having spent a fairly large chunk of my first pay.

I returned home to visit with my family the following weekend, and proudly showed my figure in my new suit. My brothers took no notice, but my father thought I looked very smart. While greeting me my mother's hand affectionately patted my bottom and she quickly detected the new addition to my underwear.

"You are wearing a girdle!" she whispered in my ear. "My, you have grown up. Getting experience at that place has done you good." I wondered at this point what my parents would have said if they had known just how much experience I now had at controlling and disciplining the girls in my charge. Or what their reaction would have been to find out their daughter was already experienced at using the tawse. In the following months some of my secrets would be revealed to my family.

My father worked at the Beardmore Foundry in Glasgow. This constituted a reserved occupation in wartime, and had allowed him to avoid National Service. (I believe he manufactured naval guns for warships during the war years.) We were fortunate to have him at home although with the amount of shift work he did we sometimes rarely saw

him until weekends. The type of work which he had done for years resulted in his being taken into hospital with a serious illness and my mother was very worried. I readily agreed to help out financially as I did not need all my salary. I also decided to spend almost all my free time at home until my father recovered. I had been able to get away early on a Friday, and this was my second visit home under these trying circumstances.

I was waiting in the house for my mother to return from a shopping trip when my brothers arrived home and I greeted them both. The younger one, Donald, was just twelve years old and in the first year of the secondary school. Both my brothers had come home at the same time and while David, who was now fourteen years old, was quite chirpy, no doubt looking forward to the weekend, Donald looked quite morose and not his usual self. I took David to one side and asked if father's illness was making Donald upset. His answer almost knocked me over. It appeared Donald had been taking advantage of the present circumstances at home and not buckling down at school; consequently he had been caught that afternoon without his homework prepared and his teacher had given him the strap.

I tackled Donald and drew out all the details. He told me he had been given three strokes of the strap and I think he expected my sympathy, for he lamented he had been promised another six, if the homework was not completed by nine o'clock the following Monday morning. I examined his hands and they showed all the characteristics of hands freshly strapped; very red in colour and emanating a fair amount of heat.

"Well my lad you had best buckle down right now and get that homework completed."

"It will take me all weekend, and even then I don't know if I can finish them," said Donald. He looked imploringly at me and I agreed to help. We worked together for hours and as we worked at the tasks it became clear Donald had been dodging his schoolwork for some time. I was furious about this and decided to take a hand in things. I don't believe either of my brothers really thought of me as a typical school teacher. If they did I do not believe they could imagine their nice big sister ever giving anyone the strap. I mentioned none of this to mother as I did not wish her to be upset further. I did manage to create some time to see my father at the weekend, and soon Monday morning had arrived. Donald looked very smug with himself feeling he was now off the hook, but little did he suspect that I intended to accompany him to school.

I met his teacher who seemed pleased that the homework had been

completed and no doubt wondered if I had come to complain about his strapping of Donald on Friday last. I assured him his action had been entirely appropriate. I told him I also taught, and asked if he would keep a close check on my brother.

"If I had not been here to help, I doubt if he would have completed the tasks," I said. "If you think he should be strapped again this morning you have the family's permission to do so."

He said he would accept the fact the homework had been completed and we agreed to leave it there. Before leaving I asked if he would phone me at the approved school and advise me of any further problems whether they be falling behind in his school tasks or bad behaviour. My brother promised me his behaviour would change and vowed not to repeat his failure to prepare homework. I accepted his word on the matter and departed for my own job.

I settled back at the approved school later that day but felt rushed and struggled with all my classes. Donald had consumed far too much of my time at the weekend and I had not had time to do the necessary preparation for the classes I was to teach. I was still angry with Donald, but had a clear course of action outlined in my own mind as to how I would deal with him should anything further occur in the future; and with that, let matters rest.

Unlike other schools, throughout each year, girls arrived and departed at approved school, as those sentenced in court were committed, and others having completed their sentence, were released. We had just received a new arrival, and the first few weeks for a new girl proved to be a testing time. The new arrivals were always a handful until they learned exactly who was boss, and accepted the routine of the establishment.

Theresa McGinty was thirteen years old, and had been caught housebreaking (not for the first time) before being committed to our charge. She fancied herself as tough. As she and another girl passed my classroom, I managed to overhear part of a conversation, which was probably standard for all new girls. Theresa and Margaret Finnegan; a girl who had been with us six months, and who now felt she entirely knew the ropes, talked. Margaret was answering Theresa's questions about the school and how it was run, some of which included the subject of discipline. They stopped momentarily outside my door. I was behind my cupboard and obviously screened from their vision, so they were not aware of my presence and felt they could talk freely.

"I've had the strap lots of times and not one of my teachers could tame me," Theresa said. "You haven't seen anything like some of the

straps they have in here,” said Margaret Finnegan, and followed with, “and that Miss McKenzie, she’s a right bitch! She belts really hard!”

“No \*\*\*\* bitch will get the better of me,” responded the arrogant Theresa; and as both girls continued on their way more four letter words could be heard from Theresa in conjunction with my name. The mention of my name caused me to remember what had been said, and by whom. Such language from girls was unthinkable, and not tolerated in our establishment. As the girls continued on their way, I was in two minds whether to stop what I was doing and dispense instant justice. However, I remembered both would be in my geography class, and I thought just wait till tomorrow rolls around; I will sort both of you out. Before Wednesday’s class commenced, I ensured both girls were present.

“Margaret Finnegan,” I had her attention. “Before we start this lesson perhaps you would like to fetch my broomstick.” She was absolutely puzzled by that remark, as was the rest of the class but I had every one’s complete attention.

“Did I not hear you calling me a witch the other day?” I said.

Realisation dawned on her face, but how could she safely extricate herself from this predicament? It was fun to watch her try.

“A’hm, er, eh, a’hm.”

“Come on, girl, you know to which conversation I am referring.”

“Well, which word did you use girl, witch, or the other one starting with the letter B.”

Silence reigned.

“I don’t think it really matters, does it, girl? Come out here at once!”

“And you, Theresa McGinty, can join her.”

I opened the desk and removed my XH.

“Cross your hands, Margaret.” Thwack! Thwack!

“Ah!”

“Change hands, girl” Thwack!

“Ooh!” Thwack! “Aargh!” Margaret now cupped both her hands and raising them to her mouth, blew on her sore palms.

To Theresa McGinty I said, “Well, Theresa, the other day, you seemed to think getting the strap was nothing.” I dangled the thick tawse before her eyes. “You can let me know when I finish if you think this strap is nothing. Your language, girl, the other day, was absolutely shocking, and if I ever hear it repeated, I will report the matter to Mrs. McEwan. In the meantime, cross your hands.”

Crack! “Oh!” Thwack! “Ah!” She dropped her hands and made to change them.

“Same hand, girl!” I barked. A look of disbelief came over Theresa’s

face and up came the same hand again. Thwack! "Oooh!" Crack! "Ah!"

"Now you can change them." Thwack!

"Ah!" Thwack! "Oh!" Crack! Very loud "Ah!" Thwack! "Oh, mummy, daddy!"

"Well, Theresa, was that nothing?"

No answer! Just a good deal of wringing of punished hands and tears! "You may return to your places, girls."

The girls were right I could be a (b)witch!

On Thursday of the following week, I got a call from Donald's teacher. The problem of Donald not preparing his homework had surfaced again. I knew my course of action; and that Friday, for my week-end visit home, along with my clothes, I packed a strap. After some thought I had discarded my three-tailer and selected my favourite tawse; my two-tailed extra heavyweight. "A short sharp lesson is what's required and there's no point in dragging it out," I thought. I had even toyed with selecting my heaviest tawse, but felt this might be too much for Donald, even though he was a boy. Held in reserve it could be used later if absolutely necessary.

When I arrived home both boys were already at home eagerly awaiting dinner. While David was his usual cheerful self I noticed Donald eyeing me warily. Did he know about the telephone call to me or was he just showing the signs guilt produces in a naughty boy? I decided not to tackle him just yet. I would at least have to talk to mother and get her agreement to my intended course of action before proceeding.

I decided to help my mother with the preparation of dinner and while we scuttled about the kitchen, my brothers sat at the table awaiting dinner. In a fairly low voice I told my mother all about Donald's behaviour to date. I know at least one brother was very nervous and anxious to know what we were talking about, but though David may have assumed it was Father and his condition, Donald must have had other thoughts.

"What can be done?" my mother said. "Will you talk to Donald?" I reminded my mother I had already done that and told her about his promise regarding future behaviour which now lay broken.

"I have a course of action and with your blessing and agreement will proceed." My mother listened and put the final preparations to family dinner as I spoke. "Mother, you know I am a teacher, and as such I have had to punish naughty girls at the approved school."

Mother looked me in the face and quietly said, "I really never thought of you having to do such a thing."

"I am required to use the strap from time to time," I said. I thought

it best to avoid too many details and tried to keep the conversation on track. "I have brought a strap home in my bag and if you agree I will punish him this evening."

She thought quickly about my proposal and a look of relief came over her face. She said, "You are an adult now, and because of your job, you really know best in such matters. I give you my full authority. What will I say to Donald?" she reflected.

"Leave it entirely to me, mother."

"Thanks, Mary." My mother did something she had not done in years. She hugged me and gave me a kiss.

I said nothing until dinner was over and the dishes had been washed. My mother was going to hospital to visit father and this gave me the opportunity I desired. I intended to punish Donald severely and felt my mother being unused to this would intervene on his behalf after I had given only one or two strokes. He was my wee brother and what I had decided to do would not be easy for me. I hoped that if it were done properly the first time a repetition need never occur and that was my intended course of action. Mother left for the hospital.

"Donald, come into the living room, you and I have something to say to each other. David, please remain in the dining room until I return and don't be surprised by any sounds you may hear."

David caught the gist of what was about to occur, but I think he thought nothing more than a shouting match might ensue. His big sister was far above such outbursts; as an adult and school teacher she would not demean herself in arguments with a child so many years younger, even if he were her brother. Donald and myself retired to the living room.

"Well, what have you to say for yourself?" He knew the game was up and quickly confessed he had broken his promise to me and had again failed to do the required homework and in addition had shown lack of application in class.

"When I was at school I behaved in a similar manner once but was cured," I said. He looked very relieved by my words. It was now obvious to me he expected nothing worse than a lecture and if he played his cards just right big sister would again rescue him. "Well, Donald, we must hope that what cured me will do the same for you." At this point I opened my bag and withdrew my tawse. My brother's eyes opened wide and he stared at the thick strap. He was unable to comprehend what was about to happen and had obviously never associated his big sister with corporal punishment.

"You will cross your hands, just as you do in school for the strap, and will not move them, until I tell you to."

"Oh, Mary you can't!"

"Yes I can, mother has agreed to it. Now take it like a man. David will be listening." I spoke not as sister to brother but with the natural tone and authority of a school teacher. This swayed him, and I watched his hands come up and cross one over the other. The tawse was over my shoulder and swished down. The familiar thwack rang out and to his credit Donald said not a word but his eyes showed while he may have been used to getting the strap, he had not felt a tawse similar to this one at his school. Wasting no time I quickly struck again and by the time I had laid on the third and was having him change hands I noticed he was close to tears. He was being brave and continued to take the very punitive strokes I laid on without much noise. However, after six strokes tears were evident, and all he could say was, "How could you Mary?" I was glad it was over and suggested he go up to his bedroom and not let David see him like that, but I warned him he would have to get himself sorted out, for I was only a telephone call away and would repeat this as often as necessary.

I sent Donald upstairs and went into the dining room, my strap still in my hands. David had of course realised by now exactly what had happened and I thanked him for remaining in the dining room. I suggested he stay down stairs for the time being and not bother his wee brother. He was astounded, and like his brother had obviously not connected his sister with the strap. I asked David if he knew why I had strapped Donald, and if he knew that his brother had been dodging his schoolwork? He said he knew something of it but was very circumspect in his reply. It was only then I realised I was still holding my strap and David may have thought he might also get a taste of it. When he realised this was not the case and I did not intend punishing him he asked me a few questions regarding my strap and punishment.

I talked for a short while on the subject and allowed him to examine my tawse. "It looks just like my science teacher Mr. Armstrong's strap but yours is thicker," said David.

I said, "It is a thick tawse but not the only one I have" and this surprised him. "I have an even thicker one." He looked at me in disbelief.

I did not wish our conversation on this topic to continue at length or in any detail. I wanted to avoid generating any interest on his behalf in straps and punishment that might be considered morbid or unusual. I felt by showing him the strap I had satisfied any simple curiosity he might have had, and by doing so had hopefully avoided the possibility of his furtively looking through my belongings to find it. A strap is not an everyday item and children in particular would show natural interest when one was produced. I hoped the issue of punishment was now



finished for this weekend at least and turned to take my strap upstairs to my bedroom, but before I could depart he said, "I had better watch my step in future now I have seen your strap." We both smiled and the subject of discipline was at least temporarily closed.

Mother returned from the hospital and brought good news: Father was finally on the mend and would be home soon. I told my mother briefly the essence of what had transpired in her absence and again suggested Donald be left alone until he was ready to come down. He appeared later that evening and mother was surprised when she noticed his eyes showed evidence of his earlier tears. I was glad she did not examine his hands. For the rest of the weekend he and I barely spoke, which was understandable. I am sure Donald was glad to see the back of me when I left on Monday to return to my job.

The girls in our care were allowed visits from close relatives, or guardians in the case of any girls without relatives. The visiting days were at the weekends and not frequent, and unless a parent requested specifically to speak to me I chose to remain as distant as possible from the families of our girls. Obviously close scrutiny was required at these times to ensure nothing of a contraband nature was passed to the girls. It could also be a stressful time for the girls, reminding them of family and friends on the outside. Sometimes younger brothers and sisters were also present and I must confess when I saw them I wondered how many of them would also end up at our establishment.

I liked to have a little privacy and saw no reason why any girl should ever have access to my private living quarters. My feelings were not shared by all the staff, and girls would sometimes even be punished by a matron in her living quarters. An all-female society presents inherent problems, and I was very careful not to give any signs that might have encouraged any girl to attempt to form any special type of relationship with me. I tried very carefully not to show any form of favouritism toward any girl. I did think one or two girls actually formed crushes on some of the staff, but my reputation as a strict disciplinarian and my frequent use of the tawse probably prevented it ever happening in my case. Many girls had not experienced the love and affection a stable family environment should provide for children and they longed for this. Once trust had been established I would allow myself to get a little closer but I preferred the relationship to be somewhat akin to what a big sister might provide, providing they still displayed the utmost respect for me. Any girl could fall from grace at a moment's notice and one might be called upon to administer the harshest punishment as a result.

Mrs. McEwan during her introductory talk had mentioned certain

practices between girls and how such relationships were strictly forbidden. However at eighteen years of age I really understood very little about it. My mother had given me some basic sex education for which I was very grateful, and as a schoolgirl I participated in the usual banter and exchange of information on this subject although my chums and myself knew very little in this regard. I felt I understood how my own body functioned. But I had virtually no experience of sex, and knew nothing of what was called "deviant behaviour".

I should explain, although I was quite naive with respect to many matters, I did understand how a girl could form a crush on a young member of our staff. I had developed a crush myself when fourteen years old for a young teacher named Miss McDermid who had arrived from Northern Ireland to teach at our school. She had a very soft, lilting Ballymena accent and that coupled with her young, fresh looks caused me to elevate her to the goddess level and I wished to be just like her. For the first two weeks of term, I doted on her, and was very unhappy on those school days when I did not attend her class. She seemed easy going and although she warned several girls concerning their behaviour in class she did not punish anyone during this time and more importantly for us girls, appeared not to have a strap, for no strap was evident in her desk. I was convinced Miss McDermid did not believe in corporal punishment and when my friend Elspeth had not completed her homework, I assured her she need have few fears that day.

You can imagine my feelings and those of Elspeth when after it was discovered she had not prepared her homework, she was summoned to the front of the classroom. Miss McDermid addressed not only Elspeth but the whole class as follows: "Girls, I have been very tolerant and lenient these last two weeks, but despite my approach I find this girl has taken advantage of my good nature. I will not tolerate this kind of behaviour and now must demonstrate another side of my nature!" With this remark Miss McDermid opened her desk and produced a thick, two-tailed strap of light brown leather. Without any waste of time Elspeth was given two strokes and it was clear that each one really hurt. Miss McDermid again addressed the class, telling us the cane had been in vogue at her last school, and that's what Elspeth would have received for such behaviour in Ireland. She warned the class that the tawse she had recently acquired would remain in her desk and any girl misbehaving in future would be similarly dealt with. I suffered just as much as Elspeth during her punishment for my heart now ached. Miss McDermid's action had swiftly ended my crush!

I do recall one incident shortly after Christmas, my first class of the

day consisted of fifteen year old girls and after calling the register I noticed two girls were missing. The class was abuzz for both were being interviewed by Mrs. McEwan in her office. Apparently both girls had been found together in the same bed by a matron when she woke the dormitory. This type of behaviour was hardly tolerated in adult society of that period. Some of our older girls experienced sexual awakenings and some others had prior sexual experience before entering our walls (some had been incarcerated for soliciting) and the temptation to indulge must have been irresistible for some of the girls. However Mrs. McEwan did not view this behaviour in girls kindly and quickly despatched both girls with twelve strokes of the cane across their knickers. They arrived at half past nine at my class quite tearful and both had extreme difficulty sitting through the balance of my lesson. How they fared during the rest of the day I do not know. Naturally one of the girls was immediately assigned to another dormitory!

Our first snowfall caused the girls to become quite boisterous during the first morning break and several large snowball fights were in progress when I arrived outdoors to summon the girls back to class. The lines took longer than usual to form, and having shown more than my usual degree of tolerance, I now had to issue dire threats to motivate the girls back to class. Needless to say two girls ignored my warnings and continued to exchange fire. "Beatrice McLean and Anne Beresford, stand over here beside me!" I commanded. With that both came quickly to my side.

"We didn't hear the bell miss, honest," they stated in unison.

"Well if you can't hear the bell, perhaps you will heed my belt! Get along to my classroom!" The two trooped along to my room. The reaction of both girls to the four strokes delivered to each of them by my XH Lochgelly, was dramatic to say the least. Both girls let out loud exclamations following every stroke, and hopped about, and had great difficulty keeping their hands in position during their punishment. I was initially surprised by the exceptional performance of my tawse. However later that day I remembered one of my classmates at school having told me the strap was twice as painful on very cold days if one had not been wearing gloves, especially if you had recently been making snowballs with your bare hands! *Ouch!*

It was some weeks before I managed to get home again for the weekend. Being low in terms of seniority I had spent Christmas at the approved school and found it to be quite a depressing time. We had a Christmas tree at the school, and had spent some happy time with the girls decorating it. However Christmas is a time for family and friends and it did not take long before the atmosphere became quite dreary as

those confined within the walls, both inmates and staff, missed family and friends. The staff did go out of our way at that time of year to extend peace and goodwill toward all the girls, however within a few days some girls had taken advantage of the situation and as a consequence the sound of the tawse could be heard once again.

I had been generously afforded more than my fair share of weekends off during my father's illness and was now making this up. I still had free time in the evenings, and could leave the premises and go into town to the cinema, or other entertainment but I found it difficult to get to the shops before they closed.

When I eventually did get home it was good to see my father well again and back at work. The family seemed to be much closer as a result of his illness. Even Donald seemed to show no resentment toward me but he was nonetheless cautious about what he said to me that weekend. Donald approached me on Sunday evening and asked me to come to his bedroom to talk. He produced all homework which he had completed, proudly displaying his mark for each piece, and assured me he had missed none. I tried to show interest in the work he presented and ventured some helpful criticism in subjects with which I was familiar. Suddenly he blurted out, "Do you have your strap, with you?"

"Why do you ask?" I quickly replied. I was not sure just what he was thinking. After convincing me he was now buckling down and performing at school, I was annoyed, thinking now it may have been a sham on his part. Was he laying elaborate future schemes for slacking off?

"David said your strap is the thickest belt he has ever seen and I wondered if I could look at it just like you showed David?"

"If I have to bring my strap out again a certain pair of boys will be very, very sorry!" I replied. "You would be well advised to think exclusively about your lessons and not about any teachers' straps. Furthermore if I find out you have been misbehaving, you know what I will do." The strap was never mentioned again by either of my brothers until well into their adult life.

When it did come up many years later it was Donald who mentioned it. My husband and I were visiting Donald and his wife Doreen. Doreen has never really taken to me and I must say the feeling is somewhat mutual. I was not sure I wanted this topic discussed in her presence; however Donald thanked me for the turning point of his school days. He said I was the one most responsible for his successful career as a civil engineer. He also said the strapping I had given him was the worst strapping he ever experienced. Then he asked had that

been due to me or did the particular strap I used have something to do with it? "A little of both!" I ventured. (Yes, I was a very hard belter!)

Doreen was horrified by what she heard, and her opinion of me sank even lower. How could I have strapped my younger brother? She said she had never been strapped at school and she was totally opposed to corporal punishment. I have always noticed that those most opposed to corporal punishment usually have no personal childhood experience of it. I could not easily find the words to begin to explain to her my motives for strapping Donald. So I decided to let it rest. I also felt in her case some corporal punishment as a child might have been very beneficial and improved her disposition and outlook on life. When we left that night I felt the relationship between myself and Doreen was at an all time low, with no hope for improvement.

There was an aftermath for myself, and after much soul searching, because I intend to tell my story in a frank and honest manner, I have decided on reveal it.

I heard the school bell ringing, but why was it ringing? The class period should not yet be ending. I was in the midst of doing something very important. The bell flooded my thoughts; my eyes popped open. I was in bed, and the school bell proved to be just my alarm ringing. It was seven o'clock and time to start a new day. It had all been a dream; but just what was that dream? I quickly cast my mind back before the vestiges of my dream vanished into oblivion. Yes, I was teaching a class at the approved school once again; before me on the floor stood a girl in the traditional grey uniform, and her face appears familiar to me. Just who is that big, curvy girl who amply fills her gymslip? It's Doreen, Donald's wife. Tears are very visible in her eyes. Now I remember! I was standing on the floor with my strap over my shoulder. Doreen had been insolent to me in class, something which I never tolerated, and was now paying the penalty! I had just given her three strokes from my favourite tawse, and she had not taken them very well. Her hands remain extended for further punishment. Despite their redness and the tears in her eyes, she was due another three strokes from me, and I intended to really lay them on. D-mn! Why do we always wake before the conclusion of our most enjoyable dreams? My husband noticed my distant thoughts and peculiar expression, and asked what was on my mind. "Oh, nothing!" I replied. How could I tell my husband? Only another woman can really appreciate the innermost workings of the female mind, and my little fantasy! On with my story.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE ESCAPE

**A**N AIR of excitement swept among our girls and thinking back now it must have produced similar feelings for them as an escape by prisoners of war did for other P.O.W.s. Our staff were addressed in two lots by Mrs. McEwan who was extremely upset by events and was very quickly reviewing security measures with us all. It struck me as closing the barn door after the horses have bolted but it was prudent to ensure no further escapes took place bringing further embarrassment to the establishment and our boss. I should add Mrs. McEwan had maintained an excellent record of prevention of such occurrences during her reign and took the break out very personally.

It transpired the girls concerned had crept from their beds during the night and eluded the night duty personnel and had literally “done a runner” by unlocking the front door and climbing a perimeter wall. I was glad I was not on night duty when the escape occurred. We were not sure just how they were attired. If they had worn the usual approved school uniform it would be very difficult for them to get far. However girls had other clothing and many were quite adept at knitting and sewing and so could alter or create clothes. The local police had been informed and to all intents and purposes it was now out of our hands until they were apprehended and returned. We were certainly not going to go out to look for them.

The weather played a factor. The girls by deciding to go during a winter month had the advantage of shorter hours of daylight. This made it easier for them to avoid being spotted. However the weather was bad and unless they quickly found someone to shelter and feed them, someone who was unknown to police as being their friend or relative, it would be a hopeless endeavour. In two days they were returned to our care and had not managed to get more than three miles from the school during their escapade. The girls were hungry and after ensuring they had been fed, they were placed in Helen Simpson’s care in the sick bay for a day for observation, and to ensure they got some necessary sleep. Much speculation abounded among everyone, staff and girls alike, as to just what sentence of corporal punishment would be awarded our escapees. While I refused to enter into any debate on the matter with the girls in our care I did ask Morag what she thought might happen.

"Mrs. McEwan has already decided and each girl will get twelve strokes of the birch, tomorrow," she replied.

I immediately checked to ensure I would not be on punishment duty and responsible for carrying out the punishment. However Morag said Mrs. McEwan had already designated Angela Bradley who had prior experience at using the birch. I reflected that Miss Bradley enjoyed much the same reputation that had been awarded me as a stickler for strict discipline and when I further realised that she had also been on duty the night the girls escaped, I felt sure Angela would make them really suffer.

The Official Home Office Birch was not a collection of switches from a birch tree, but three long rattan like rods bound together at the handle and seemed to punish in a similar manner to the cane, although in a much harsher fashion than any school cane. The use of this item continued in the Isle of Man long after it had been withdrawn from the rest of Britain. It has been described (though sometimes wrongly) in numerous newspapers and magazines when the issue of corporal punishment is under discussion.

The two girls were required to attend a special punishment parade at two o'clock in the afternoon. The only staff present were Angela Bradley, Helen Simpson and Mrs. McEwan. Knickers were dropped on this occasion and in my classroom that day my class and I heard many of the yells that emanated from both girls. The door to the punishment room had been deliberately left fully ajar by Mrs. McEwan and the message conveyed by the birch rod delivered to bare bottoms was heard and appreciated by almost all staff and inmates. Both girls by all accounts were in a sorry state following their punishment and were placed in the sick bay. They did not return to their dormitory for a further twenty four hours. During this period both shed many tears and loud sobbing could be heard intermittently from the sick bay for the rest of that day.

The girls bore the marks of their punishment for several weeks and showed them on request to other inmates. It was a very severe punishment and looking back perhaps too harsh but if any other young madams had any thoughts of imitating those two they very quickly put them aside and no other successful attempt at escape was made during the years I spent at this establishment. The mere mention of the word birch rod and its possible impending use had a distinct effect on every girl who knew of its qualities. It was a threat seldom given by our staff and was never used idly or without intent.

A month later, I was teaching geography, to some fourteen year

olds. It was the final class for the day and while teaching I had reason several times to warn Helen Docherty, (whom I had punished on previous occasions in my class) and some other girls to keep quiet and get on with their work. Eventually I lost patience and Helen was called to the front, along with the last girl to have engaged her in conversation. During all of their conversations I noticed the girls kept looking at Helen's hands. What was the big mystery? I would soon find out!

"Cross your hands, girl!"

"Ooh!, please, miss." I looked into her eyes, and noticed the tears forming. Was this a new ploy on her part to try to avoid punishment?

On closer inspection of her eyes I felt many more tears had recently preceded them. I looked at her hands. They were very, very red and bore all the evidence of severe punishment recently inflicted.

"Who punished you, girl?"

"Miss McKay and Miss Guthrie, miss."

"How many strokes have you had?"

"Six from Miss McKay before lunch, and six from Miss Guthrie this afternoon. I couldn't take any more today miss, not from you." I looked closely at her hands again and noticed she had experienced earlier that day both two- and three-tailed variants of the tawse. The weals from the tails of a three-tailed strap were overlaid over the weals left by Morag's two-tailer.

"All right," I replied, "but you get them next class. Back to your seat and best behaviour, girl. Just where do you think you are going, young madam?" I said to the other girl, who obviously thought she could pull a fast one, and was also by now returning to her desk. "Get back out here!" The two strokes of the tawse which followed was the lightest punishment which was given by me in class and served only as a token warning regarding future behaviour. I never gave single strokes of the tawse at this school, for they would merely have been laughed off by most of our tougher customers!)

The girls seemed pleased by my decision not to punish Helen at this time and I thought it the correct one. After my class ended and the school day was over, I wiped my blackboard and the girls departed. I heard a discussion among six girls, with Helen in the centre.

"I think Miss Bradley is the worst."

"No, she's not, it's Miss McKay," said another.

"No, she's not," said Helen. "It's Miss McKenzie and I should know."

"That's right," piped up the other three, "Miss McKenzie is the worst."

"Just what do you know girl! And explain your remarks concerning your teachers. Just what am I the worst at?" I demanded.



“Who’s worst at giving the strap,” they stated in unison. So now I knew and excluding Mrs. McEwan and her special reformatory grade strap, these girls felt the hardest belter of hands (and bottoms) within our school was none other than yours truly, closely followed by Angela Bradley and Morag McKay. I was more than a little surprised at that time by their decision, and I have to admit just a little pleased when I found I was best. (We all like to come top in things!) From my very limited experience of receiving corporal punishment at this school, I inwardly concurred with the girls’ inclusion of Morag in the top three!

During my second winter at the approved school a flu virus hit the staff. Angela Bradley was responsible. She picked it up on a trip home while in the town of Dundee. It soon spread to others on the staff and before we knew it we had a serious staff shortage. We could not take a risk and cancel night duty. So we soldiered on making the best of available resources. Because of the specialised nature of the establishment we could not obtain satisfactory outside relief. (Teaching staff from the school system could not have easily coped, even if they had been available to us). Two male teachers eventually arrived from a similar establishment for boys but by then the crisis had past and our own staff had generally returned to duty.

We felt it important not to let it take hold among our inmates and quickly isolated any smitten staff member. The basic problem was one of numbers, and it was very important not to let a chink show in our armour, otherwise who knows what mayhem would be likely to ensue. With limited teaching resources, we left no free desks in the classrooms we used, and that meant an overlap in girls’ classes and ages in any given room. The individual lessons being taught now held little importance. The top priority was try to keep all the girls occupied and busy. for the devil finds work for idle hands. When all staff had been assigned, and even Mrs. McEwan pressed into classroom service, we were still left with an overflow of ten girls. It was decided not to stuff them into other classrooms and have girls share desks. So they were left in the room next to mine and I deputised one of our more trusted girls to look after them. That first morning things went well and the entire school was reasonably well behaved under threat of dire consequences. We went along to lunch, and each staff member, to ensure things remained calm and ordered, also took a tawse with them.

As an extra precaution I had taken my heaviest tawse to my classroom and hoped that might serve as an additional warning to the girls of what would befall them should any trouble break out. That afternoon I heard the level of noise grow from the classroom next to mine and eventually there was a loud bang. I issued dire warnings to my own

class and hurried next door, bumping into the trustee whom I had left in charge on route.

"Oh, miss, you must come quickly," she said.

"What's wrong?" I replied. But before she could answer I was inside the classroom and could see for myself. Mayhem had indeed broken out and a small cupboard had been knocked over. This had caused the loud bang which I heard from my classroom next door and in addition a fight involving every girl was now in progress. Hair was being pulled by some and four girls wrestled in twos with each other.

"Girls! Stop this nonsense at once. At once, do you hear me?" I belowed. Some obeyed but others continued. "Mrs. McEwan is on her way with a birch rod for those who don't stop this fighting right now!" That brought matters to a stop. "Carol Bain," I addressed the trustee, "go next door and collect the strap lying on my desk and bring it back here". She returned in a few moments with my heaviest tawse. "Line up, all of you!"

The girls fell into line, and some noticing exactly which tawse I held now started to consider their plight.

"Oh, please, miss," said Mary Ferguson, "Jane McGuire started it, she's to blame."

"It was nae me," retorted Jane, "it was that Fiona McAteer."

I quickly interjected, "I don't care who started it, I will now finish it. McGuire, cross your hands!"

Thwack! "Oh!" Crack!, "Ah!" Thwack!, "Aargh," Thwack! Positive scream.

"Change hands, girl!"

Thwack! "Ah!" Crack! "Ooh!" Swish! No contact!

"Don't you dare draw your hands away, girl. You are getting an extra stroke for that!"

Thwack! "Aargh!" Crack! "Eek!" Thwack! "Oooh!" followed by loud sobbing. I think you get the picture, and that scene was repeated a further nine times by me. No other girl drew her hands away, although many had difficulty keeping them in position. By the time I finished not one girl had avoided tears and now I was left with the dilemma of how to keep them occupied for the rest of the day.

Writing or other tasks requiring use of the hands was now out of the question for these girls and would remain so for the rest of the day. They all sat sobbing at their desk. Some blew into cupped palms while others had hands thrust into armpits or between thighs trying to squeeze away that awful intense stinging and throbbing in their hands. The tawse I had just used was 1/2" thick, 28" long, and very stiff and hard and many of these girls had never experienced that grade of tawse

before on their hands. Just holding a knife and fork at dinner would no doubt be extremely painful for them.

The cupboard was righted by the trustee and myself, and I had Carol Bain read to the class from a book for the balance of the day. My own class having heard the retribution dispensed by me to the girls next door behaved like angels for the rest of the day and before we knew it the epidemic was over and things were back to normal. Even without the punishing power of Angela Bradley and Morag McKay who were both victims of the virus, we had weathered the storm.

Some days later the same virus hit the teaching staff at the boys' establishment which had provided two relief teachers to our school. We were of course blamed for spreading the germs and Mrs. McEwan was asked to provide some assistance for daytime classes from our own ranks. Most of our more senior staff were reluctant to go so Mrs. McEwan asked if I would fill in for a week. She displayed a confidence in my ability to handle even the most difficult jobs, and I decided I would not let her down. I had mixed feelings about going. I thought it would be interesting to see a similar establishment for comparison purposes, but wondered if I could handle tough, possibly violent teenage boys. I thought back to my own schooldays. I recalled how one of the bigger boys in the qualifying class at primary school had withstood six strokes of the strap from a woman teacher without the sign of a tear. However with a substantially thicker tawse and with the same number of strokes I had been able to make my brother cry! I decided to take my heaviest tawse!

On arrival I found the place very similar to our girls' school and the mode of operation in keeping with our own. I was not required to stay overnight at the boys' reformatory and returned each evening to my own bed at my own school.

The gentleman in charge was very pleased to have me and explained their strategy to deal with the crisis would be similar to that successfully employed by my own head matron. I was assigned a classroom and thirty tough inmates of thirteen and fourteen years of age. The male teacher in the class next door issued a severe warning to my class regarding the consequences of any misbehaviour on their part before commencing his duties next door. He also very quietly told me to knock loudly on his classroom wall should I require any assistance.

I decided to set the tone and produced my reformatory grade tawse and placed it on top of my desk. The boys' reaction was what I had hoped for and heads lowered and the level of restlessness went down. I gave them time-consuming tasks which had been successfully used during the previous crisis at my own school and hoped for the best.

The morning dragged on and I suspected it would only be a matter of time before my right arm would be tested! This class showed all the signs of "new teacher syndrome". That and the fact that I was a woman meant I would probably have to display my strapping technique. I think the boys sensed my own unease and I am sure they noticed my clock watching. I had the opportunity to check the contents of the desk I sat at and noticed in addition to all the other teacher's paraphernalia the desk also contained two straps. One was a 24 inch XH Lochgelly, similar to my own heavy classroom strap. However the other was a black strap, thirty inches long and very thick and not of the standard Lochgelly pattern. It had three tails, looked very old, and I might add well-used and was thicker and looked very much more formidable than the XH Lochgelly! (I later found out heavy school Lochgellies were the lightest straps used in this school and were only felt by the youngest boys. XH Lochgellies and reformatory grade tawses were very much in vogue and saw a lot of use in punishing older boys even for minor classroom offences!)

At around eleven thirty the inevitable happened. I knew I would not make it through to lunch before having to deal with someone. The level of restlessness had grown and despite several warnings on my part, two boys not content with whispered comments now talked openly and commenced to playfully strike each other. The time had come to act!

"*You boys!*" I bellowed "come out to the front. Is this kind of behaviour tolerated in class by your teachers here?"

"Mr. Andrews lets us talk in class if we like" replied the bolder one.

"Well I don't, and I told you as much. You lad, cross your hands!" I decided to use my own tawse and picked it up.

Despite its awesome proportions the first boy continued with his cheek. "Surely, miss, you're not going to belt us for just talking?"

"I most certainly am. Get your hands up at once and do not move them unless I tell you to!"

I calmed down and took my time lining up my first stroke. Thwack! It was a good one and the look on the boy's face showed he had not been expecting such a hard stroke from a mere woman. Thwack! he gasped at the second and after changing hands drew away for the third. "Get your hand back in position at once, boy!" I commanded. Before he had time to consider further resistance the door opened and Mr. Thompson the friendly male teacher from next door came in. He had obviously heard my tawse in action and now checked to ensure things were not getting out of hand for me. The boy's hands immediately returned to position and I advised he would get two extra strokes

for drawing them away. I continued on my course of action and loud exclamations from the boy accompanied the four strokes which followed. I also perceived the hint of a tear or two in his eyes.

The second lad was similarly despatched with four strokes from my tawse. His reactions matched those of his friend and both evidently feared what might ensue from one of their own teachers should anything further untoward happen. Mr. Thompson withdrew well satisfied by my response to misbehaviour and the rest of the day passed off quietly if not perfectly.

I remained at the school for the rest of the week and only used a tawse on one other occasion. Being satisfied by the straps available to me in the desk I sat at, I had taken my own strap back to the girls' reformatory on the first night and did not bring it back. My final day's teaching presented a different class and those fourteen year olds were either very stupid or had not heard of my exploits on the previous Monday morning. Needless to say we had barely started the day when one boy decided to challenge my authority.

"You, lad!" I shouted

"Who, me?" he replied

"Yes, you! What are you doing out of your seat?"

"Just getting my aeroplane," he replied as he retrieved a paper aeroplane.

"Bring that out here at once!" I snarled. He did. I tore up the plane and opened the desk. I took out the very thick black leather strap. I intended to try this different tawse. I had noticed that despite its thickness it had become a little supple, no doubt through age and use. However its tails were still very stiff and hard and that was unusual for a strap of such age! He viewed the tawse covertly and became a little nervous.

These boys had obviously seen this strap in action before. I took my time lining myself up and laid it on in my usual forceful style, getting plenty of swing with this long strap. It fairly cracked home and the look on the boy's face confirmed this strap was extremely painful. I confined myself to only three more strokes but his reactions and vocal expressions confirmed he found them all equally painful.

This strap was at least the equal of my own reformatory grade tawse and felt even heavier. It bore no indication of its origin. Before leaving that day I asked Mr. Thompson if he could provide further information regarding the source of this tawse. He told me that Mr. Andrews, the teacher to whom it belonged, had had it for many years. It apparently conformed to an older standard for reformatory grade straps, and would not have been so unusual in prior times. Mr. Andrew had a

name for it and called it "Black Beauty." The boys feared its punitive qualities more than any other strap in this school. It apparently had come from a saddler in Ayrshire, and was made from some special type of very thick leather, but he did not know just what sort of leather that was. I ventured that that was a pity!

He also said that despite earlier reservations regarding having a woman on staff the male teachers had been very impressed by my ability to control the boys. Mr. Thompson further added that the boys who felt my right arm during the week were also suitably impressed and did not imagine a young woman could belt so hard! I was glad the week had reached its conclusion and was very happy to return to my own domain. I felt I had not really learned much useful information at that establishment other than the fact that with an appropriate tawse I could also control a class of tough unruly boys.

It felt good to be back in my own classroom, with the girls with whom I was familiar. I even allowed some questions regarding my whereabouts during my absence, and the girls amongst other things wished to know if the boys were treated as severely as themselves. I assured them the boys were just as firmly disciplined and with that we turned our attention to the business of education and lessons.

The following morning I was in Mrs. McEwan's office retelling events of the previous week and answering a lot of questions from her concerning the operation of the boys' reformatory, when a new girl arrived. It was customary for all new girls to be interviewed by Mrs. McEwan upon their arrival. I had not witnessed this event before and was asked to remain while Maureen Sullivan, the latest addition to our inmates, was brought in. Some paperwork was first attended to and the custody of the girl signed for by Mrs. McEwan. The court officer then departed leaving just the three of us in Mrs. McEwan's office.

After reviewing the girl's file Mrs. McEwan addressed Maureen who was thirteen years old.

"I see you have been sent here for persistent truancy from school and petty theft!" said Mrs. McEwan. "Well, what have you to say for yourself, girl?" The red haired girl, who was tall for her age, answered with a surly, "That's right."

"I know very well that's correct, girl. I mean have you considered your past behaviour and are you now prepared to mend your ways and buckle down with your schooling?" The girl considered the question but again answered in a foolish manner with an "I don't know, miss."

"Well, let me tell you girl at this school we have ways of convincing girls to amend their behaviour." With that Mrs. McEwan opened the drawer of her desk and extracted her thick strap. The girl eyed it war-

ily as Mrs. McEwan held it by the handle end in one hand and with the tails in her other hand, sharply tugged in opposite directions on either end of her tawse causing it to snap to attention. "You know what this is don't you, girl?"

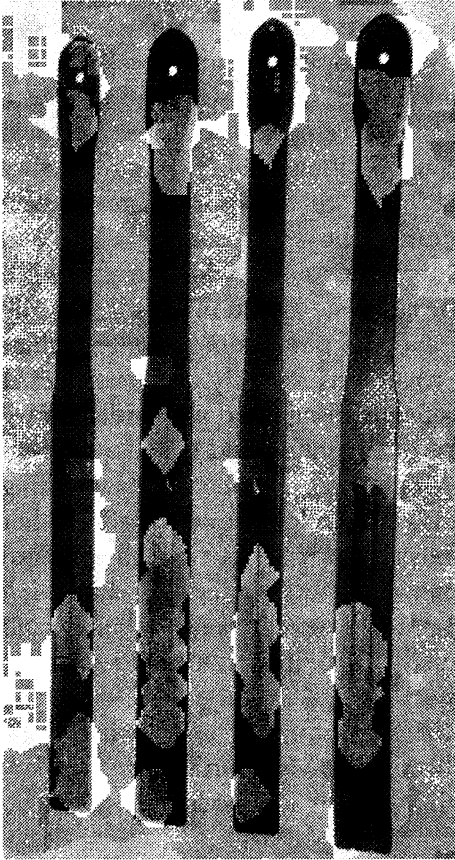
"Yes, miss."

"Failure to obey the sensible rules of this institution, or any cheek

to any member of my staff, or lack of application on your part to your schoolwork, means the strap! We will not tolerate any nonsense from you at this school! Do you understand me, girl?"

A mumbled, "Yes, miss," came from Maureen. Then Mrs McEwan spoke to me. "Miss McKenzie, will you take this girl to the storeroom and have her properly kitted out in the school uniform. Following that would you take her to Helen Simpson for her medical exam. I have assigned her to class 3B."

I took Maureen along to the store cupboard and located the correct size uniform. In her case because of her early development I decided to include a bra which was normally only worn by older girls. I thought as I talked with her her red hair (a sure sign of a quick temper) and positively cheeky attitude would ensure it would



*Lochgelly tawses by J. Dick. Left to right: M, H (3-tailed), XH, XH (3-tailed).*

not be very long before she made acquaintance with several tawses within this school. Events would soon prove me right.

On her third day I watched her along with another girl get four strokes for misbehaviour during lunch. She seemed to take them well enough and I thought she probably had a high tolerance to pain. I thought back to my own schooldays and realised my own tolerance as a girl was very low. It took only one memorable strapping of only four

strokes to put me on the right track. I wondered just what it would take with Maureen.

Some weeks and no doubt several strappings later Maureen was part of a class of thirteen year olds I would teach. On the previous class day she had not handed in her homework I had given her, and had given an excuse about having been sick the previous weekend and unable to complete her homework. She seemed to be brighter than the average pupil and I felt she was not really wicked or bad, but a girl who had gone astray. I had checked with our registered nurse and found Maureen had lied about being sick. I felt she was different from many of our other inmates and did not really belong in such an establishment as ours. I thought if I tried the "Donald treatment" she might be quickly improved.

"Maureen Sullivan, bring out this week's and last week's homework to me!"

The girl rose from her seat and the first words from her mouth were "Please, miss."

Before she could say a further word I said, "I hope I am not going to hear another one of your lies, girl! Did you do your homework?"

"No, miss," she replied.

"Come out to the front of the class! Cross your hands!" She did as she was bid. I had selected my extra heavy two-thonged Lochgelly. Thwack! Crack! Thwack! "Change hands, girl!" I ordered. Her right hand got the same treatment as her left and I noted the very punitive strokes I had just given had been felt by her. While she was not yet freely crying tears showed in the eyes. "That's your punishment for failure to prepare your homework, now cross your hands for lying to me last class!" A look of disbelief came over her face and reluctance showed in raising her hands. "Get your hands up at once, girl, or you will be on your way to see Mrs. McEwan!" That was the magic threat. Her hands slowly came to the required position. "Let me warn you before I begin again if you try drawing those hands away you will be punished by me this evening on your bottom." She well knew what that meant and her hands stayed in position throughout the further six strokes I gave her. It required a great deal of fortitude on her part. Before the conclusion she was crying loudly and just like Isobel Watson before her, I isolated Maureen at the back of the classroom and suggested she consider her future ways.

No girl had previously seen me deliver such a severe punishment in my classroom and the effect it had on the other members of the class was really quite remarkable. I never in my life saw homework appear so quickly. One girl, Moira, frantically shuffled through large quanti-



ties of paper, and at one point I thought if she doesn't soon find her homework I might have to send her back to her dormitory for a quick change of her underwear! The look of relief on that girl's face when she found what was required was something to behold. However that was not the end result I sought. Just how would it affect Maureen?

Maureen came to me during dinner the next evening and asked if we could talk alone. I agreed and broke my own cardinal rule about allowing girls into my room. She talked freely. It transpired she had been over-indulged by her parents, particularly her mother, to the point where she felt she could get away with anything. Many of our girls suffered from the direct opposite. i.e. neglect from both parents. She apologised to me and said she had been very silly, and asked how she could change things in her life. She now realised how her behaviour had hurt her family, particularly her mother, and in telling me she again wept, although it did not require the benefit of a tawse to produce these tears. Tears of shame fell just as freely that evening as the tears of pain I had produced just twenty four hours or so ago.

I comforted her and as I did so I helped dry her eyes and my fingers held her left hand. She immediately winced and drew away and I realised she must still feel some pain from yesterday. I looked at her palm and was a little surprised to find her hands still bore some evidence of my strap. Both palms at the fleshy point close to the thumb exhibited a little bruising from the ends of the tails; so I had obviously really laid the strokes on.

"Does it still hurt?" I asked.

"Just a little, when you squeezed my palm," she replied.

"I'm sorry, this time I didn't mean it!" She smiled. I was forgiven. Yes, I had been very severe. I produced my cold facial cream and taking each of Maureen's hands in turn rubbed a generous portion into her palms and fingers. The girl's expression told me my decision was the correct one.

I told her she would have to serve the balance of her sentence but I would give her my full support in every way possible with her schooling and if she behave she need suffer no further strappings within our walls. I asked her not to betray my trust. She did not and I am pleased to say she returned a very different girl to her family and successfully completed her schooling.

## CHAPTER 5

### NO RELIEF

**M**Y SECOND year at the approved school was drawing to a close, and by now I was fully experienced at all aspects of the job. I had always felt attuned to the psychology of the girls and felt I could ably match wits with the best of them. When I had been a pupil I felt, like many of my school friends, we could pull the wool over the eyes of many teachers. Looking back I now know little escaped them. Most of the excuses and many of the tricks tried by the girls in my charge were not new to me for I heard and saw many of them when I had been a schoolgirl. I had even tried a few without much success myself. Schoolchildren tend to dismiss the fact all teachers were at one time pupils themselves and teachers are just as knowledgeable and wily in the ways of schoolchildren as the pupils themselves.

I was teaching European geography to a class of fourteen year olds. The lesson had just commenced and a certain Mary McPhee sat with smarting palms from my tawse for failure to prepare the required homework. I invariably strapped for failure to prepare homework and all in my classes were well aware of this fact. It astounded me that girls from time to time failed to prepare required homework for me for the outcome for them was a certainty! It was important to maintain a degree of consistency in this regard and had I failed to strap Mary McPhee those who had been previously punished in my domain for the same crime would have felt aggrieved and wronged by my past behaviour!

I was adding place names to a map I had laboriously traced on the blackboard to indicate changes to national boundaries following the second world war. I barely heard any noise but was aware something was going on behind my back (teachers everywhere seem to have eyes in the back of their heads), and turned to see a white pill rolling in my direction being frantically pursued by Miss Bridie Gallagher. All medicine was dispensed by our registered nurse and the personal possession of such items, including aspirin, by inmates was not permitted. I stood facing the class as the pill continued on its way finally ending its journey at my feet, its movement having been arrested by my shoe. Miss Gallagher realised further pursuit was a lost cause and now stood rooted in her tracks in the passageway between the desks perilously close to the front of the class.

“Well, what have we here? I don’t think I have to ask to whom this pill belongs, do I Bridie?” I stated.

"No, miss," was her response.

"Just what sort of pill is this, and why do you have it?" I enquired. A great deal of fidgeting ensued from Bridie as various excuses were no doubt being quickly evaluated by her to see which might best suit her current predicament. The mention by me of a swift trip to Mrs. McEwan should any further hesitation on her part ensue in telling all soon had the truth flowing. The pills turned out to be pain killers, no mere aspirins these, but of the heavy duty variety, and the small round cardboard pill box she produced revealed they had been prescribed for her mother. (One of the benefits of the new National Health Service). They had been passed to Bridie during a recent visit by a family member and Bridie had been in the process of passing one to Miss McPhee, when the item in question fell and rolled to the front of the class. Further enquiries from both girls revealed the act was not solely one of goodness and charity, but was done for profit. It transpired a prosperous trade could be done within our walls with these pills. They were much sought after by inmates who had recently, or would soon suffer corporal punishment. The going rate was sixpence a pill, thereby providing the supplier with a healthy profit. (Bridie was several decades before her time as a supplier of drugs, and even then the business was highly profitable.) The pills were duly confiscated by me and such behaviour not being permitted, I placed Bridie on report. I knew I would be the one to deal with her later that evening.

When Bridie reported to evening punishment parade I had already decided to use rattan instead of my general preference for leather. I felt this punishment should be memorable to prevent any further repetition of her crime. Possession of prescribed pills by inmates was a potentially serious problem and their dispensing by "unlicensed practitioners" could not be allowed to flourish.

"Come in Bridie, you know why you are here! I have not informed Mrs. McEwan about your behaviour, but do not think that means you will not be appropriately punished by me." I now opened the cupboard and extracted one at a time three long slender canes whose flexibility I tested in the traditional manner by flexing each one, and cutting them through the air. The noise made by each had a very profound psychological effect on Bridie exactly as I had intended them to do.

I had been taught the correct use of the rattan cane shortly after I commenced duties at this establishment.

If I have Morag McKay to thank for very expertly teaching me to use the tawse then I must in turn thank Angela Bradley for any proficiency I possessed with the school cane. Morag had suggested I speak to Angela and have her give me instruction in its use and I must

confess at the time I was somewhat relieved. (Knowing Morag's teaching methods regarding the tawse, if I were to be instructed by Morag in the correct manner in which to use a cane, then the prospect of my being bent over a horse with my knickers on show was a very real one, and at the time had very limited appeal for me. I sincerely hoped Angela would employ different teaching methods.) I had approached Angela and she was more than happy to give me the benefit of her extensive experience with the cane.

Angela was a Scot though she had spent several years in England before returning to her native land. She had apparently gone with her family to live in England when she was fourteen years of age. She had completed her schooling there before spending a few years as a matron at a similar establishment to ours located just outside Liverpool. I think her first introduction to the cane was at the wrong end during her schooldays, based upon one or two remarks she made to me over the years. Certainly at the period in time of Angela's schooldays in England, the cane was freely given across schoolgirl knickers to those who contravened school rules. Her three years working and teaching in a girls' reformatory had taught her the correct method of use for the cane, and additionally had provided ample opportunity for her to practice this craft. Angela was well versed in the finer points of discipline using a variety of implements. She suggested I attend one of the punishment parades over which she would preside, and I readily agreed.

The evening in question yielded two young offenders, and in deference to me both would "enjoy" a taste of rattan rather than leather. I met Angela and we proceeded to the punishment room together some half an hour before the offenders were due to arrive. Angela carried a bag and once inside the room revealed the contents to me, producing a pair of knickers suitably stuffed with some clothes. "This will provide a target for you to aim for," said Angela with a smile. She then proceeded to the cupboard and after unlocking the door extracted several canes. They were all traditional school canes with crooked handles and Angela explained we stocked two grades. Senior schoolgirl canes 33" in length and just over  $\frac{1}{4}$ " in thickness, and senior schoolboy canes 36" in length and around  $\frac{3}{8}$ " in thickness. A reformatory grade of cane 36" or more in length and some  $\frac{1}{2}$ " in thickness was available to establishments such as ours, but Angela said they were really not appropriate, and tended to produce more bruising than stinging weals. Senior schoolboy canes provided a far better alternative for our needs. Angela noticed my perplexed expression at the use by her of the word schoolboy. She said I need not be confused, for the terminology was merely

a grading of severity, much as some straps were graded. She assured me they worked equally well for girls.

Angela then gave me the benefit of her extensive knowledge. I was amazed at just how light the implement is, being lighter than an equivalent bamboo length. I was also astonished at the flexibility of the item. Angela showed me the correct method to hold a cane. She also informed me how to administer both medium and severe strokes and demonstrated how the difference in delivering each was not substantial. She advised the upper arm should be held against the body and only that portion of the arm from elbow to wrist should be cocked prior to delivering a stroke. A good follow through with some wrist action was also essential to deliver maximum sting. Angela further advised that since our culprits were permitted the covering of knickers all strokes given by her were of the severe variety. I spent a fair amount of time swishing the cane at an imaginary target until Angela was well satisfied by my movements and had corrected any faults in my swing. I then spent some time caning the well-filled seat of the stuffed knickers and listened to more advice from my mentor regarding the aiming and placing of strokes. It was very important to deliver strokes in a methodical manner and to try to prevent any from overlapping. (If this occurred the offender suffered unduly and the skin around the area could be broken.) Angela also advised the most tender area of a girl's bottom was the crease where bottom meets thighs and she usually placed her final stroke of every caning on this very spot.

The two young offenders now entered and I had the opportunity to observe Angela's mode of operation. I had lost track of time and the girls must have been outside the door for at least five minutes. During this period I had taken a fair number of practice strokes with the cane which could not have gone unnoticed by the waiting girls. The girls may have thought what they heard was Angela limbering up. Was this responsible for the ashen countenance of both of them? Or was it merely the sight of Angela and her reputation!

Angela first lectured them in severe tones and really put the fear of God into the two reprobates before any real action occurred. Looking back I am not so sure my own knees didn't quiver during her verbal onslaught. I was just eighteen years of age at this time and closer in age to the young offenders than to Angela. (I never did learn if this was done just to impress me or if it was her usual style and was partly responsible for the reputation which she had acquired in the area of discipline and punishment.)

In no time at all the first girl was placed over the horse and I assisted in fastening the restraining straps and lifting her gymslip clear.

Angela had selected a senior schoolgirl cane and flexed it a couple of times before commencing the punishment. The second offender stood with her back to events facing a wall. The first stroke fell with a swish and thwack, producing a sharp intake of breath from the recipient. In a very smooth motion the cane rose again and a pause of about ten seconds ensued. The second stroke fell and this time the repertoire of sounds included a yell, which quickly followed the swish and thwack. Angela's motion was graceful and seemed to be without any real effort but there was no doubting the efficiency of the strokes. After four more had fallen the girl was released by me and tears were very evident in her eyes. Angela soon dispatched girl number two with a like number of strokes and a similar end result. I again marvelled at her style.

In later years I may have been able to better her with a tawse, but Angela was the complete disciplinarian, being equally proficient with tawse, cane or birch. I took a cane to my room and just as I had done with the tawse spent some time practising my strokes on a pillow before I dealt in earnest with any of our reprobates.

However to return to Bridie. I placed the apprehensive girl over the horse and fastened the restraining straps. I lifted her gymslip and tossed it over her head revealing an ample bottom encased by her knickers. I next checked to ensure no padding was present. It had been known to occur at our establishment; though what sort of mugs, some of the girls took us for, I don't know. I now placed the target in my mind and mentally envisaged how I would place the ten strokes I intended to inflict with the 36" cane I had selected for the job. Notwithstanding the ample size of the posterior which lay before my gaze, I felt I would have to start just slightly above the middle of the bottom in order to accommodate all strokes without overlapping any. I raised the cane and carefully struck the first stroke giving more concern to placing rather than power. I was rewarded with a distinct gasp from the girl in addition to the expected swish, thwack. I reminded myself to wait at least ten seconds before delivering number two. It fell with slightly more force and according to my plan. Another loud gasp from the girl but no other indication of pain. My third stroke did produce what had been intended a distinct yell indicating some severe pain was now being felt by Bridie. I continued on course placing each stroke progressively lower than the preceding one on the girl's bottom. I also did my best to ensure they did not overlap. Following the seventh stroke the girl's exclamations more closely resembled screams than yells; and long before I finished loud crying was also evident. The tenth stroke was delivered in accordance with my mentor's teaching and fell exactly in the girl's crease where bottom meets thighs. Bridie certainly felt the

pain it caused. My task completed, I released a very tearful and repentant young girl who at this time no doubt deeply regretted what she had done and also regretted the fact she had not retained one of her own small pills. There was to be no relief for Bridie!

I, in turn, in some respect, felt a little sorry she had born her punishment alone. I thought at that time the provider of the pills (whichever family member that turned out to be) should have suffered a similar fate.

My decision to use rattan rather than leather was based upon the end result produced by each implement. Use of a cane requires a good deal of concentration on the part of the punisher and a great degree of accuracy in placing the strokes. While a tawse should also be given with due care and attention it does not require the same delicate accuracy in the placing of strokes that a sound caning demands. A tawse produces pain and some red surface weals over the area it contacts. The pain is intense and deep at the time of receipt, and in the case of multiple strokes often results in an initial throbbing, agonising pain. However the pain may go after two hours in the case of just one stroke or several hours after a multiple stroke strapping of three or four strokes to each hand. It does not last overnight unless the hand has been bruised by the strap. A phenomenon which could occur when a heavy tawse was used and a bony part of the hand or the wrist was inadvertently struck by a stroke. The cane, I am told, produces sharp pain on contact, and this continues to build as further strokes are received. However the surface is deeply markd producing the unique and notable tram line effect and the resultant weals last many days and consequently so does a degree of pain. I intended Miss Gallagher should smart for several days!

The pills were given by me to Helen Simpson our R.N. who recognised their content and was glad to have such a powerful pain killer in her cabinet. The pills were dispensed by Helen and proved to be very effective at relieving severe period pains for some of our staff but none were given to ease the pain of any girl's punishment.

During one of my regular trips home, my mother mentioned her younger sister, my aunt Patricia. Aunt Pat had dropped by one Saturday to visit mother and was delighted to hear I was now working as a teacher. I had not seen my aunt for several years but retained fond memories of both her and her husband, Uncle Bob. Both sisters visited infrequently during the war years and Aunt Patricia had moved out of Glasgow when the war ended. I had not seen her for at least three years and had quite forgotten until my mother reminded me that Aunt Pat was also a school teacher. My mother was very proud of her

younger sister and the fact she was a school teacher. My aunt was located in a small town only two miles from the approved school and had asked my mother to let me know she was asking after me, and would be very happy if I could drop by for a visit one evening. My mother provided my aunt's new address and I resolved to visit her at an early opportunity.

Two weeks later on a Wednesday evening a local bus dropped me at the foot of my aunt's street and I quickly made my way to her front door. My visit was not unexpected as I had written before hand to let my aunt know my intentions. At this time not many homes in Scotland had a telephone. After knocking, the door was opened by my cousin, young Sammy. He was the younger of her two children, and was now ten years old. Aunt Patricia appeared close behind him having followed in his wake.

"Come in, Mary, it's really good to see you once again. My, you have grown since the last time I saw you, which must be all of four years now."

"Hello, Auntie Pat, hello Sammy, how have you been since I last saw you?" I replied.

"We are all well. I was sorry to hear about your father, but I understand he has completely recovered from his illness. That must be a great relief to your mother!" ventured Aunt Pat.

"Yes, we are all very relieved by my father's recovery," I responded. By now I had been ushered through to the living room and greeted by my Uncle Bob who seemed to be in his usual humorous mood. Further conversation followed about family and past times and my aunt said we must talk after dinner about my new job. Cousin Jean, Sammy's older sister, now thirteen, arrived home. Both Jean and Sammy had really grown since I had last seen them and of the two children only Jean had any real memory of me and my brothers.

Dinner was served and I really enjoyed the meal. Home cooking always triumphed for me over institutional food. Though meals at the reformatory were substantially better than they might have been, I found a certain sameness accompanied them all. Our menu seldom varied from week to week and one could tell just by the day of the week what would be served. Mondays always meant mince and tatties, while Fridays in deference to our Roman Catholic staff and inmates brought fish. My aunt did me proud this evening, and the usual assortment of traditional Scottish sweet goods followed my aunt's steak pie. Scones and other baked items along with a good assortment of chocolate biscuits were all on offer. I fairly tucked in and having a sweet tooth availed myself of the variety of goods offered.



Following supper my uncle excused himself; being a church elder he had a meeting of the local kirk session to attend and having first dressed warmly to keep out the changeable Scottish weather, he expressed his delight at seeing me once again and departed for his church duties. Jean drew her mother aside and asked if she could go to the pictures promising to be home before ten o'clock.

"We have been through this all before, I don't care if your homework is done, you are not going to any pictures during the week when you have school in the morning. Let that be an end to it, and no further nonsense in front of your cousin Mary or you will be a sorry girl!" My aunt's tone was one I had not heard from her before, but one which I immediately recognised. It indicated she would brook no nonsense and I recognised the tone of a fully-fledged teacher well used to dealing with children. With that my aunt looked at me and shook her head, and Jean retired to other pursuits while we went to the living room.

The warm coal fire cast a cosy glow and my aunt closely questioned me in very friendly terms about my new job. We shared many teaching experiences and I enjoyed listening to the various things my aunt told me; many of which would prove useful in my career. The evening drew on and soon it was time for me to go. My aunt said before I left she wanted to give me something for my mother and racking her brains hunted through several drawers in a cabinet. I stood close to my aunt intrigued by what item she might produce. It turned out to be a photograph of both sisters when they were quite young on holiday in Ayrshire and my aunt asked I be sure to give it to my mother next time I saw her for it would spark some memories off for her.

While my aunt had rummaged through several drawers I stood beside her and noticed in the last drawer my aunt had opened, the one in which she had found the photograph, something I immediately recognised. Coiled within it was a black school strap. My aunt noticed my recognition of the object and she extracted the tawse from the drawer, presenting it to me for examination.

"I presume you have one of these?" she asked. I answered in the affirmative, while examining her possession. The strap was three-tailed and not a Lochgelly. It had been acquired by my aunt from her predecessor when she started teaching. With respect to weight, I thought it approximated my medium weight in thickness and it appeared to be well used. It did not compare favourably in severity to any of my heavier straps so I did not venture any comment which might have been construed by my aunt as derogatory in nature.

"I imagine you use yours quite a lot with the type of girls you have to deal with!" stated my aunt.

"Yes, I do," I replied.

"It seems to be the only thing some children understand," continued Aunt Pat.

"Yes, I agree, I don't know how we would cope without it," I stated emphatically.

"You are probably wondering what this is doing here," said my aunt. But before I could respond in the negative, she continued. "I changed schools a couple of years ago and now teach junior secondary, I felt at that time I needed a heavier strap, you probably know what it can be like in a new school; slave, sweat, bawl and belt, till you get some respect. So I acquired a replacement for this one which I have had since I first started teaching. I got a twenty four inch, two-tailed-heavyweight from Dick's in Lochgelly and am very satisfied with it. I brought this one home and am glad I did for that young imp of mine Jean, has benefitted from a couple of sessions with it." Jean came at this point to bid me farewell; her younger brother already being tucked up in bed.

"It may be old but it hasn't lost its sting, has it?" The question was directed at Jean who by now realised the topic of our conversation and noticeably crimsoned while eyeing the tawse with a mixture of what I took to be dislike and a little fear. "Your cousin Mary has one these, and knows how to use it; so you had best mind your manners when talking to her!" stated my aunt. My aunt's comments caused me to recall my punishment of my younger brother and for a fleeting moment I felt my aunt must have been told of this event by either my mother or by my brother David or even Donald himself. But I very quickly put such thoughts from my mind and concluded my aunt had based her remark solely on comments made by me just moments before.

Jean by this time bid me goodbye, and no doubt intensely disliking the subject of our conversation, quickly withdrew. I departed promising to visit with the family on future occasions.

While waiting for my bus, I thought about my aunt, and admired her decision to use a tawse when warranted within her own home. I felt her approach to the subject of discipline closely matched my own. The benefits to be derived from this item, were not solely confined to the schoolroom. I wonder how many parents would own such an item outside of the teaching profession, and retired teachers?

During a visit to my aunt's house later that year my aunt again rummaged for something in the same drawer that had contained her tawse. I was drawn by curiosity to look with her at the contents of the drawer for I wanted to see her strap once again. I was curious concerning its

length. The old strap was nowhere to be seen. Lo and behold, lying full length, was a brand new Lochgelly; two tailed, some twenty four inches in length. I noted its substantial thickness, very close to my XH by my reckoning, and was mildly surprised to see the letter H and not XH stamped in the handle. If this strap indeed was only an H it was the heaviest one I ever saw and very close to the XH grading in thickness.

Again my aunt noticed my curiosity. "How do you like my new tawse?" she asked.

"It looks like a real beauty! And I have one just like it!" I ventured.

"Jean is getting to be quite a big girl now and I thought this model best suited her needs!" explained my aunt. No explanations were in fact necessary. I fully understood. "I don't know Aunt Pat, if my mother ever told you, but I had reason to punish my brother Donald, with my tawse, just over a year ago," I stated. With that remark my aunt gave me a knowing look which told me she understood exactly where we both stood with respect to discipline. She further explained that her old strap had mysteriously disappeared. After some close questioning on the matter Jean admitted she had smuggled the item from the house and disposed of it in a dustbin.

My aunt's solution, was to acquire a brand new Lochgelly, give Jean a well deserved punishment with the new strap, and in addition to stop her pocket money, until the new strap had been paid for. I mused, poor Jean had made a very foolish judgement, for in addition to no money for the pictures or other entertainment for quite some time, I felt this new strap would be far more severe than my aunt's previous model, and would really make the young lady smart. I was sorry I had not been present to witness the look on Jean's face when my aunt had first displayed this strap to her as a replacement for the one she had stolen. I also wondered what her thoughts must have been at that time as she quickly realised she would shortly experience its dreadful sting.

When Jean and I were alone she confirmed my thoughts for me for she admitted the strapping her mother had given her with the new Lochgelly for the theft of the old strap had really hurt and had produced a fair number of tears. She also told me she had been warned that should this strap mysteriously disappear it would be replaced by a dreaded XH! However, I wasn't so sure in my own mind, having examined the thickness of Aunt Pat's new tawse, that she hadn't already acquired one!

I often wondered over the years if Jean and my brother Donald ever spoke to each other of their respective experiences at the hands of myself and my aunt. I think each would have been convinced the treatment they had received outdid the other. I felt perhaps, having seen

both straps and estimating the strength of my aunt's right arm, there may have been little difference between what either child experienced.

When a child received corporal punishment, on the whole they took it stoically and without a great deal of fuss or complaining. I feel this built character in children and was altogether healthy in establishing many good qualities in our children which persisted throughout their lives. Many children were punished in the home using a variety of implements. A few parents did equip themselves with a tawse, however many used a suitable strip of leather or the back of a brush or just the parent's hand.

At the institutional level few options existed for any child caught misbehaving to evade punishment. If a punishment was refused from a teacher it generally meant being sent to the headmistress or headmaster. Whatever punishment the child had been due to receive was then usually increased, and it also usually meant a thicker strap would be used! Six of the best from the head, with a heavy strap, was quite common in these instances. So it just didn't pay for an offending child to try this option. This was also true of approved school discipline and almost all girls took their medicine in a brave and dignified manner. Certainly there were squeals and tears and the occasional hand withdrawn during the application of strokes of the strap, however outright mutiny seldom occurred. I say seldom, because from time to time it did occur, and we had to deal with it.

We received a violent girl of fifteen years of age who had been involved in a stabbing incident which threatened the life of her victim. The case was pretty notorious at that time and shocked Scottish society of that period. In my opinion the girl should have been dispatched immediately to women's prison, however due to her youth it was deemed she might benefit from a period in our care. When she arrived at our institution Mrs. McEwan advised all the staff that the girl should be carefully watched particularly during meals to ensure she did not acquire any implement which could be later used as a weapon. She also insisted severe punishment be given for any offences committed by this individual. It was important that she should learn exactly who was boss and accept the rules and discipline of our environment as quickly as possible.

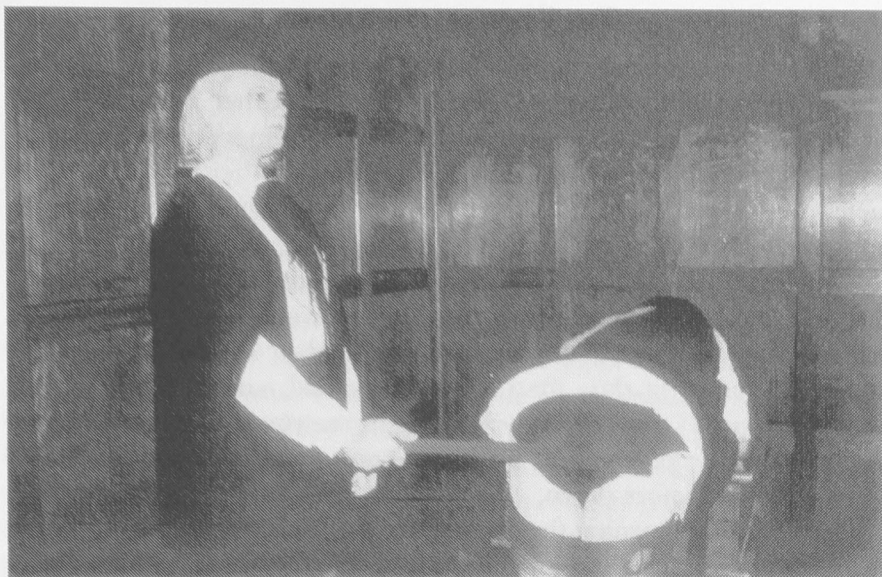
One evening shortly after her arrival, I was in my own quarters preparing some lessons, when a knock sounded at my door. It proved to be one of our trustees, and she told me Morag had asked that I come to the punishment room immediately and assist her with a problem girl. As we both hurried along I realised Morag was the assigned matron for this evening's punishment parade. When I arrived at the



punishment room I discovered the problem girl was our new arrival and a tussle had already ensued involving Morag and both trustees. The girl had apparently refused to lower her knickers and place herself over the horse. I could see Morag had born the brunt of the girl's assaults for one of Morag's stockings was laddered beyond repair! The girl stood defiantly in one corner of the punishment room and glared at both Morag and the other trustee, while issuing any number of taunts, many of which contained foul language.

I was no heavyweight but I was a tall young woman and had a good deal of strength in those days. It certainly didn't take long for matrons and trustees to restrain the girl and manhandle her over to the horse where she was soon secured by wrists and ankles to its legs. During this manoeuvre Morag sustained more minor damage and both stockings were laddered. However the rest of us remained fairly unscathed. Both trustees were dismissed and I could tell both girls were truly relieved for many of our inmates at this time really feared our new charge. The gymslip was soon raised, and Morag and myself consulted on how we should now proceed. This girl's behaviour warranted the birch, however Mrs. McEwan was not on the school premises that night and it was mandatory we secure her approval prior to using our final deterrent, so in the end we decided to proceed using the reformatory grade tawse. I lowered the girl's knickers while Morag composed herself and prepared for the task in hand.

I then watched impassively as Morag commenced the punishment. The target presented was a suitable one and offered ample flesh to



*Use of the tawse on the bottom*

allow for the spacing of good hard strap strokes. Morag laid on in an appropriate manner befitting the occasion and the girl's abusive language soon changed to yells of pain. As we had previously agreed Morag gave the girl twelve strokes for her original offence and then passed the long, thick tawse to me.

I surveyed the surface before me which now presented few unblemished areas. The second twelve strokes which I intended to inflict as punishment for her mutiny would be very painful for this girl for all strokes would be given to previously punished flesh. (A strap stroke was painful, but the real killers were the following strokes administered to recently punished flesh. When a heavy tawse struck the palm or bottom for the second or third time on the same portion of flesh it really hurt). I laid it on in my usual manner and drew some real howls and screams in the process. When I had finished her bottom was in a very sore state, for the twin tails of this tawse had visited and revisited every square inch of the available bottom flesh which had been presented for punishment. The tails left some very impressive weals which would be felt all night by our young delinquent. Needless to say loud sobbing could be heard from the other side of the horse!

Morag departed and returned shortly thereafter bearing a strait-jacket obtained from our sanatorium. We decided to employ this restraint as a precaution before releasing the girl. After unfastening the girl's wrists we removed her gymslip and proceeded to thread her torso into this jacket. We didn't encounter much resistance and her arms were soon secured. Morag had also obtained a pair of our rubber

knickers. These proved more difficult to put on the helpless girl, but Morag and myself persevered, and in due course her nether regions were thus enclosed. This operation caused the girl more pain, for as the tight constricting rubber was drawn up her legs to her bottom it contacted her weals. I also pondered the heat emanating from the girl's bottom which would now have difficulty escaping, trapped by her tight confining rubber knickers. However, this precaution was necessary, as the girl would now spend the balance of the evening, and all night in our sick bay, and would not be able to attend to any body functions unaided. Our night duty matron was informed, and said she would ensure the girl's safety. However the night matron was relieved when she heard of the precautions we had taken to ensure no further incidents occurred before dawn.

The following morning the girl was led just as she was in strait jacket and rubber knickers to see Mrs. McEwan. Our head matron then asked the girl if she had learned her lesson. At this the girl showed continued hostility and was immediately returned to the sick bay for the rest of the day. Late afternoon she was again brought before Mrs. McEwan and showed an improved disposition thereby allowing her release, and return to normal clothing. However the following evening she struck one of the trustees who had assisted Morag and myself at the punishment session and this resulted in another trip to the punishment room and twelve strokes of the 36" cane as punishment. Mrs. McEwan still held the dreaded birch rod in reserve should this action fail to produce the desired results.

The girl did mend her ways and from that time forward adhered to our routine, and caused us few further problems. I, however never really trusted her, for I felt she was an evil person. She was perhaps the only girl I met at approved school I would describe in this manner. We had within our walls naughty girls, who after they arrived in our care quickly changed their ways. We also had bad or wicked girls who in the course of time and after sufficient doses of the heavy leather tawse were reformed. However, when this girl left to serve the balance of her sentence at women's prison, I seriously doubted we had improved her character. I believe she came to us too late in her life. For had she arrived much earlier at our establishment, I think things might have been very different for her!

## CHAPTER 6

### ACROSS THE RELIGIOUS DIVIDE

**I**N SCOTTISH life the religious division between the population plays a prominent part. Over many centuries people have travelled both to and from Scotland and Ireland as the Celtic population moved within a fairly similar territory in search of a better future. With the arrival of the Reformation almost the entire population of lowland Scotland converted to Protestantism in a relatively short period of time. I read in a book dealing with this issue that the census for the city of Glasgow at the beginning of the eighteenth century revealed only three Roman Catholic citizens within the city boundaries. A large influx of Irish and the arrival of Roman Catholics from the Highlands of Scotland during the nineteenth century meant a Roman Catholic presence, particularly in the west of Scotland which grew to represent about 25% of the population of the west of Scotland by the late 1940s and over the decades many issues led to tension between the two communities. I believe Manchester and Liverpool even to this day have a similar religious divide to Glasgow due to an influx of Irish immigrants.

The Scottish Education Act of 1918 was very comprehensive, but in addition to other things the act guaranteed fully funded separate Roman Catholic schools in Scotland. Parts of this act were highly controversial at that time, and they created a division among school children which many felt to be unhealthy for the good of the community. A division within education that still remains to this day, and continues to be a controversial topic. However within our walls no such segregation existed and our establishment contained girls of both faiths and I might add a religiously mixed teaching staff. It was just one more dimension we had to deal with and if not carefully controlled could lead to trouble within our little community on a very large scale as girls paired off across the religious divide. I am happy to say no such animosity ever existed during my time amongst our staff.

Church services were conducted each Sunday for our inmates within the school. A local Roman Catholic parish priest arrived to conduct nine o'clock mass and following the service heard confession from any girl so moved. A service was held at eleven o'clock for those of the Protestant faith, and this was conducted by a Presbyterian minister or sometimes by an elder from the local Presbyterian church. Girls were not forced to attend any service, however the influence of all churches was much greater during this period and our Roman Catholic girls in



particular were strongly encouraged by our Roman Catholic staff to attend mass. Given the control the Roman Catholic Church enjoys over its own school system, religion and education in those days were very tightly bound together. As a schoolgirl I had friends who were strapped at the school they attended if it was discovered they had failed to attend mass, or properly observe a "holiday of obligation."

Since the Protestant faith spans a number of denominations, (Presbyterian, Methodist, Episcopalian etc.) Protestant girls were free to decide whether they wished to attend Sunday services which were conducted along Presbyterian lines. Most girls chose to do so for the service provided a break from the weekly routine of the approved school and the girls at least enjoyed the singing of hymns if nothing else! The girls in our care almost without exception had not been regular church attenders and generally came from families with little religious conviction.

The alternative for any girl choosing not to attend religious service was not free time. It suited our routine to have girls attend religious services and in my opinion it certainly did them no harm. When girls did not attend church they required supervision by a member of staff. A trip to the classroom and the reading of a prescribed educational text resulted. Positively no talking to any other girls also confined was permitted during this period, thereby emulating the subdued atmosphere of church. Strict classroom discipline was enforced during these sessions and any breach of this rule or other misbehaviour by a girl was rewarded by classroom punishment. This meant a dose of the strap. As a result our church services had a very high attendance and the religious persuasion of each girl in our care consequently was no secret. During this period we seldom encountered any girl who was not at least nominally of the Christian Faith.

With boys the football issue, particularly as it related to Rangers and Celtic Football Clubs could spark disagreements ending in fights, however as girls generally were less interested in such areas the likelihood of this being the catalyst for trouble within our walls was fairly remote. However one had to be very watchful and try to quell any little incidents before they could get out of hand. The most likely spot for trouble was the playground and that is exactly where our major incident came to life. I don't say that is where it all started for the seeds were sown by a number of small acts from a few girls well before the minor riot erupted.

Had we been more vigilant we would have put more significance to the appearance of two predominant colours worn by some of the girls. Since much of their time was spent in uniform with little opportunity

to sport such favours our staff were relatively slow to catch on. The colours seemed to sprout on the playing field at weekends and influenced the make up of some of the teams for sports engaged in by our girls. The colours chosen were Rangers Blue and Celtic Green and one young madam had even embellished her choice with the addition of orange. A colour significant to both sides of the divide incidentally, but I will not differentiate which side she favoured. I heard one of our staff mention the appearance of the colours one Wednesday during a teaching break and felt at the time it did not receive the appropriate amount of scrutiny or consideration it warranted. However still being fairly junior in terms of my seniority I felt it was not really my responsibility to question the matter further. Surely older heads should have prevailed at this time.

The incident in question occurred one Monday morning during the morning break when all girls were in the playground and was sparked by things which had been said and done on the playing fields during the preceding weekend. Unlike traditional schools our complement of girls could vary quite radically depending on the prevailing juvenile delinquency rate, and that of more serious crimes committed by our inmates, or the prevailing attitude of the currently presiding magistrates. We held girls from eleven to sixteen years of age broken into five forms and eight classes by age. Each form level could have up to fifty girls though in the case of younger girls eleven and twelve years of age, who were always fewer in number, we generally never had more than twenty five per form level. The total capacity for the institution was a maximum of one hundred and seventy five, although this was never reached during my spell within the walls.

Being a fairly small community it was quite usual for most of the staff to know a large number of our inmates by name. The mention by name of one of the naughtier reprobates in our staff room by a staff member seldom required explanation to those other staff present as to the identity of the girl in question. Such comments by our staff generally related to behavioural incidents and infractions committed by the girl in question and invariably contained the respective punishment meted out as a result and the reaction of the girl so dealt with!

I was in the staff room enjoying a mid-morning cup of tea. I was reading a magazine and many of my peers were engaged in the usual girl talk. Our staff being all female, topics of staff room conversation broached a range of subjects. Current affairs and the weather usually quickly gave way to much more interesting items for women and current fashions and the latest cosmetic products were always on the agenda. The respective qualities of different brands of many items could be

discussed with impunity knowing no males would burst in to cause discomfort or embarrassment. When I shopped it was with the combined experience of many women, not merely myself. During just such a discussion, Morag summoned everyone present to the playground.

I had been vaguely aware of an increase in the level of the volume of noise coming from that area but knew we had other staff assigned to deal with it. When I was on playground duty I did not tolerate any playground misbehaviour from our girls, and all my peers were well aware they should not either.

As we filed out in what must have resembled a “conga line” the level of noise grew and when we arrived outside total mayhem seemed to ensue in the playground. The girls could quickly be identified as being in three distinct groups. Those who favoured blue were furiously fighting those who favoured green and there was a third group much larger than either of the other two of non-combatants some of whom were very frightened by the proceedings. A few others however took a more than casual interest in the outcome. Mrs McEwan quickly arrived on the scene and before any other staff member had reacted to the carnage, she very quickly formulated a course of action and issued the necessary instructions to all staff as to how to proceed.

Helen Simpson assisted by our trustees (none of whom were participants in the fight) quickly escorted the non-combatants inside and herded them all down a passageway and into a classroom, not however the closest one to the outside door. They remained with the group behind closed doors. The remainder of our staff, as instructed by Mrs McEwan, split into two groups and each group moving in single file in opposite directions very quickly encompassed all the combatants in what is described in military terms (according to my husband) as “a classic pincer movement.” None would escape from our encirclement! The fighting continued though with far less intensity as all within the circle now became aware of our presence. They quickly realised they were totally surrounded. Mrs. McEwan waited until the fighting had all but died out before issuing the command for all hostilities to cease. I later learned she had used this period of time to identify those she considered to be the possible ring leaders of both sides.

The next step was to segregate the girls into the rival groups, and while the blues remained in the playground, the greens were marched under escort to our gymnasium. Following this manoeuvre the blues were escorted to the first vacant classroom. I thought at the time why don't we just line the hooligans up and deal with them on the spot? But later realised that had the scene been witnessed (unlikely given our high walls) or overheard (a much more likely prospect due to the rever-

beration of sound within the enclosed play area) by any outsider passing the school at that time, it would have been very difficult for any of our staff to explain, now that the insurrection was over the justification for the strapping of about fifty girls by at least half a dozen teachers. I could just imagine how our "gutter press" would have treated such a story.

Mrs. McEwan knew exactly what she was doing, and how to proceed; and her handling of that incident alone set her apart from the rest of her staff. She certainly proved that day why she was the boss and no one else! Classes were suspended for the time being and the next step was to isolate the ring leaders from both groups; a total of ten in number, five from each group. Those girls were further siphoned off and placed in separate classrooms under supervision. Mrs. McEwan then spent some time interviewing our trustees to ascertain the cause of the fight. She quickly established religious differences as its root and confirming her identification of those considered by her to be most responsible.

Mrs. McEwan decided on appropriate justice and informed all staff that those girls who had not participated in the fight would face no sanctions, including those who had shown an interest in egging the combatants on. Punishment for all those who participated in the fight would be four strokes of the tawse for those eleven and twelve years of age, six for those thirteen and fourteen years of age and eight for those girls fifteen years of age. The ten ringleaders, would suffer six on each hand from Mrs. McEwan herself and all strokes were to be administered by way of the reformatory grade strap, well laid on!

I think Mrs. McEwan knew which of her staff could lay it on with a tawse, although by what means I do not know, for Angela was asked to deal with the blue fifteen year olds, while I was assigned the opposite greens. Morag took those blues due for three on each hand while Margaret Quigley took the respective greens. Those considered less accomplished with a tawse picked up the remaining small fry.

I had seven girls to deal with and all were fairly tough customers, one even sported a tattoo on her arm, which was then something only rarely seen on really tough boys.

All punishments were dispensed in the gymnasium and the respective groups were operated on individually. When the girls entered, the sight of six matrons and Mrs. McEwan with reformatory grade straps in hand must have been a chilling one! Thus we had the spectacle of three matrons simultaneously administering the tawse to three different age groups for each group of combatants. This represented the only truly mass punishment I ever witnessed and the sound within

the gym of those tawses at work produced a fair litany of noise not only from the impact of the strokes but also the multitude of different sounds emanating from the girls undergoing punishment. Loud thwacks and cracks from the tawses were liberally interspersed with gasps, groans, bawls, yells and outright crying from the victims. The occasional sound of a matron's voice issuing any number of standard commands, could also be heard. 'Hold out your hands!' 'Change hands girl!' 'Your left hand again!' 'No nonsense, girl, or you will be very sorry!' 'Keep those hands up!' 'Don't you dare draw your hands away on me, girl!' And many other standard phrases relating to the administration of punishment.

The punishment of each girl with whom I dealt, beyond what I have already outlined was not particularly memorable for me, although I do believe it may have been for the girls, for I tried very hard to lay on my hardest strokes! Needless to say every girl punished by me wept freely as did most of the combatants that day. While others departed from the gym, matrons and inmates alike, Angela Bradley and myself waited behind per instructions received from Mrs. McEwan. Mrs. McEwan then dealt with the ringleaders.

Those who suffered the ultimate punishment meted out that day, of twelve strokes each from our head, really bawled and yelled, although by the end of her line-up it appeared to me Mrs. McEwan was running on empty! (I think she was unsure herself before commencing whether she would run out of steam before the end and consequently employed Angela and myself for possible backup should this occur.) By the time she had finished she had dealt out one hundred and twenty hard strokes of the tawse; something that would tire anyone out!

Classes continued that day although without much conviction. Each class I took that day had its share of punished girls. All showed evidence of their painful fate. Faces were still red and smudged from earlier tears. Many sat with hands still thrust into armpits, while others held them between their thighs. From time to time palms were still cupped and raised to the mouth to be blown on: though just the sight of a girl's punished hands by the victim herself caused many a fresh outburst of tears. Most of them were unable to hold a pen or pencil, let alone write anything, and the minds of all concerned were elsewhere. We all reflected on what had transpired that day.

Mrs. McEwan continued her investigation as to just what had precipitated this event in order to prevent any future repetition. She also announced to the entire school in no uncertain terms should any further outbreaks of this nature occur the birch rod would be employed on all who participated in them. It was rumoured that some of our girls

thought one of our staff was softer on girls of her own religious persuasion and dealt more harshly for similar offences with girls of a different faith; and this had been one of several factors prompting the riot. I however felt there was no truth to this theory. Perception however can be as important as fact; and the matron in question, in the followings months, gave a few demonstrations with her tawse, which totally discredited any such theory, with respect to her fairness of treatment of our girls thus ending any and all doubts! Needless to say certain colours were banned from display from that time forward.

However following the incident one of our staff room wags posed the question, "What do you get when you mix Rangers Blue with Celtic Green at this school?". We racked our brains for the answer before asking her, "What do you get?"

"A fine shade of *Lochgelly red!*" —which of course alluded to the colour of the palms and fingers of every girl who had felt the tawse in the gymnasium that memorable day.

One other piece of staff room humour which springs to mind, from the same source, following another memorable punishment went as follows; "Did you hear eight girls from the third form have just been on a tropical holiday?"

Only one of our listeners was remotely taken in by this statement and replied "No, I don't believe it!"

The rest of us listened intently for the punch line which was delivered as follows: "Well I understand they all recently experienced *hot palms!*"

One of the most sought after items within the approved school, and second only to money among our inmates in bargaining and purchasing power, was cigarettes. At this time, cigarettes were in short supply and even when rationing ended they were still only obtainable in relatively small quantities. Most cigarettes were sold by newsagents and in order to buy a packet of cigarettes many newsagents insisted their customer also buy a newspaper. Since I never smoked, I was not concerned about this but some of my peers smoked and were very dependent on nicotine. Given the medical problems caused by cigarettes for our population in latter years it is a pity in many respects they did not remain rationed!

Within our walls smoking by staff was confined to the staff room and a matron's own quarters, though a matron could smoke outdoors on weekends. Mrs. McEwan put these sensible restrictions in place to avoid our inmates from unduly witnessing our staff smoking and thereby being tempted themselves to indulge. Given the nature of the girls within our walls some had already tried cigarettes and liked them,

while others were merely drawn to anything which was forbidden.

Two sources of cigarettes were available to girls. One was as contraband passed to a girl by a visiting relative. This activity was closely policed and seldom occurred. The second option was to steal cigarettes from a member of our staff. This was a risky proposition, but one which occurred more often than our staff would like to admit. Those staff who smoked carried cigarettes and a lighter or matches in their overall pocket or in a handbag. Petty pilfering did occur and while our staff carefully guarded money and other prized possessions it was difficult for smokers to carefully guard their cigarettes twenty four hours a day.

Given the daily routine for a girl from Monday to Friday it was difficult for her to enjoy a cigarette unobserved and without a very high likelihood of detection. Additionally dormitories were cleaned and tidied by the girls on Saturday mornings and inspected by those matrons on weekend duty. At this time such contraband items as cigarettes and matches were sought out by the duty matrons. If a girl possessed such items they had to be carefully hidden.

Needless to say possession of cigarettes or matches by a girl or such items found within her locker carried a very painful penalty.

Angela Bradley was a smoker and to this day I remember the brand she smoked, "Black Cat". This brand was popular, particularly with women smokers. Other popular brands such as Players Navy Cut, Capstan and Senior Service were aimed directly at the male market, and Woodbines were popular among the working class as the least expensive brand of cigarettes available. All of those brand names are now mere memories for I don't think one of them is sold today!

Angela and myself were on weekend duty and we had both been engaged in dormitory inspection. It being summer and the weekend, I had left off my overall and was dressed in a summer frock. Angela however was in formal attire, for her overall pockets allowed her to carry her cigarettes and matches in one pocket, while a very formidable strap lay coiled in the other ready for immediate use. We had just finished our inspection and all seemed to be in order. The girls had done a very good job of cleaning and each dormitory was remarkably tidy. I felt quite proud of the girls' achievement and both Angela and myself retired to the staff room in good spirits to enjoy a well earned cup of tea and for Angela, a much needed cigarette.

After I had put the kettle on Angela reached into her pocket to discover cigarettes and matches missing.

"I'm sure I put a full packet of cigarettes in my overall pocket this morning. I can't have lost them already!" she exclaimed.

"Have you got your matches?" I enquired.

"No, they are missing as well!" she responded.

"I think you have been victimised by one of our inmates," was my deduction. I watched Angela as she quickly recalled the events of the morning.

"Aha, I think I know who may be responsible. Joyce Mulligan brushed against me during dormitory inspection and I have long suspected her of being a smoker."

"I think she has sticky fingers, for this would not be the first time she has pilfered something," I added. We both enjoyed our tea and during it we formulated a plan. I returned to my room and changed from my colourful frock to a simple white blouse and navy skirt. I also collected my three-tailed tawse and left it in our duty room; for I felt it might shortly see some service.

The weather being fine all girls had by now gone outdoors and the first thing we did was to return to the dormitory of our suspect. However a quick check of lockers revealed nothing unusual and no cigarettes. Our young madam would not be so lax. At this stage we both felt it would not be long before the cigarettes were being enjoyed by our inmates. We both knew the most likely spot to enjoy a cigarette was outdoors and from past evidence of cigarette ends we knew the girls favourite place was behind our gardener's shed. If we were to have any chance of success we would have to split up to catch the culprits unawares. We both ventured outdoors independently. I proceeded first and wandered aimlessly through the playground talking to many girls en route. The warm sunshine was being enjoyed by all and the inmates were in a very happy frame of mind as they enjoyed a variety of outdoor activities which included such simple things as skipping rope. I even allowed myself the luxury of skipping, but found I was badly out of practice, although my participation was greatly enjoyed by many girls.

During this time Angela had ventured into the playground but she was behaving in a far more formal manner while travelling in a direction away from the shed. I withdrew from my skipping activities and appeared to return to the main building via a side entrance. I instead quickly moved to our playing fields. Those girls engaged in sport were far too busy to notice me and dressed as I was from a distance I could be taken for an inmate. I quickly closed on the shed and approaching from the rear, noticed and smelled tobacco smoke. I now moved in. Joyce Mulligan and three of her friends were each enjoying the full flavour of a "Black Cat" cigarette. My arrival on the scene caused them all to quickly discard their cigarettes. However all had been caught



red-handed. All four girls were marched by me back to the building and I retained the discarded cigarettes as evidence. The brand name "Black Cat" showed on each one.

The girls were taken to the duty room and questioned with regard to ownership of the cigarettes. They each refused to say how the cigarettes had been acquired but Angela and myself were convinced Joyce still had the packet and matches on her person. A quick strip search was then conducted commencing with Joyce and after removing her skirt both "Scottish Bluebell matches" and "Black Cat cigarettes" were found, having been tucked up one leg of the girl's tight knickers. Angela turned to me and said as she pointed at the accomplices, "Miss McKenzie, will you please punish these three girls for smoking! This wicked girl is coming with me to the punishment room!" And with that Joyce was hauled away.

My three-tailed heavyweight then dealt out six strokes to the outstretched hands of each girl. As I previously mentioned smoking by the girls carried a heavy price! Angela and Miss Mulligan emerged from the punishment room shortly thereafter. Angela had her strap draped over her shoulder, its two tails hanging down her back, thereby freeing both hands to lock the door to the punishment room. Having done so, she then coiled her strap prior to returning it to her overall pocket. This strap was undoubtedly Angela's favourite; an old two-tailed Lochgelly and unstamped with respect to weight; but it was longer than most, and at least as thick as any XH.

Joyce Mulligan was squirming in agony and vainly tried to massage her bottom with one hand, while her other hand clutched her knickers. The tears flowed from her and I pondered the present state of Joyce's bottom, for I felt sure during the preceding minutes Miss Bradley had really leathered the girl. Angela having now retrieved her cigarettes adjourned to our staff room to enjoy a long awaited puff. Poor Joyce on the other hand spent the rest of the afternoon indoors on top of her bed face down and bottom up, crying.

I never did hear tell of that young madam ever smoking again! But later that afternoon I saw the girl's bottom and given the number of weals from Angela's tawse which decorated her bottom, I was not in the least surprised by the final outcome. I did not comfort her, the girl had committed a number of infractions, including stealing, and had been appropriately dealt with. It was very important the actions of any matron be fully supported by all staff and not undermined by the action of another matron, however well intentioned. The girl therefore got no sympathy from me. Joyce would have reason one day to be grateful to Angela for breaking her of the smoking habit. However

such gratitude would not be felt at this time, and would have to wait for another day!

Mrs. McEwan's system of assigning matrons on the duty roster was very complicated and involved any number of variables and to this day I have yet to fathom it. I did try to understand it, but just when I thought I had broken her code she would introduce new elements and I would be all at sea again. Since the schedule was posted a month in advance one could make plans for personal activities covering that period, however long term planning was a bit of a gamble. I seemed to draw weekend duty with Angela Bradley quite regularly during this period and the girls knowing both our reputations were generally well behaved when we were on duty. However it was not always the case and during another of our weekend stints together another vice reared its head.

It happened on a Saturday afternoon, dormitory inspection was over and had gone well, and both Angela and myself felt we might enjoy a trouble free weekend. Again the weather was good and this allowed girls free access to the outdoors. The girls generally were better behaved during more clement weather when lots of sports could be played and other outdoor activities engaged in. Trouble was more prone to brew when the girls were cooped up inside due to foul weather.

Angela sought me out and asked me to come and take a look at Carol Brown, a fifteen year old girl. Carol was skipping with much younger girls, a little unusual in itself but was also behaving in a silly manner. Very often this meant nothing, but who really knew what lay beneath the surface, and sometimes it was better to investigate strange goings on rather than ignore them. We both casually proceeded towards the girl and before she knew it we were upon her. She had difficulty standing without over balancing and Angela immediately suspected she might be ill. However as the girl tried to speak in answer to Angela's question concerning her well being, I noticed the fumes from her breath.

"What shall we do? Miss Simpson will not be back till Monday, should we call a doctor?" It was not so much a question but more Angela thinking out loud.

"No need, unless he brings a stomach pump! This girl is tipsy." I mused. The look on Angela's face in reaction to my statement was a mixture of amazement and anger.

I thought this did not bode well for Miss Brown. "Let's get her inside and to bed as quickly as possible with minimum fuss," I suggested.

We managed to manoeuvre the girl inside without drawing too

much attention to ourselves. Angela was all for applying the third degree immediately and wanted to question the girl without delay. I realised Carol had consumed too much alcohol and any information volunteered at this time would be garbled or suspect. With that the girl was duly put to bed in the sick bay and both Angela and myself looked in on her for the rest of the day and during that night. I was concerned she might be sick and throw up, but did not occur and the night passed peacefully.

The following day the girl had a hangover but that did not prevent Miss Bradley from getting to the bottom of the matter. Following lengthy questioning it transpired our gardener's young assistant who had been taken on for the summer to assist with grass cutting etc. had been coaxed by our young madam into providing a half bottle of scotch whisky in return for sexual favours. These activities had taken place inside the gardener's shed. This news horrified Angela and certainly caused me some concern for the immediate thought of possible pregnancy entered my head. All sorts of newspaper headlines danced in my head none of which provided any comfort. We had to ask difficult questions to find out just how far this girl had gone. Fortunately it transpired they had not gone all the way, I think the boy was more inept in this regard than our charge and nothing too serious had occurred. All concerned breathed a huge sigh of relief, however Carol's relief was short-lived for in no time at all the girl found herself on the way to the punishment room in the clutches of Miss Bradley.

Carol returned in tears to the sick bay and bed for the rest of the day, though this time the anguish she suffered was not confined to her head but also in her bottom and hands. Miss Bradley had severely strapped her hands for drinking and then caned her bottom for her activities with our young gardener. Come Monday when Mrs. McEwan was informed of the weekend events she endorsed the actions taken by Angela and myself and dismissed our young gardener. Mrs. McEwan hired as the lad's replacement a very agile old age pensioner.

## CHAPTER 7

### FIRE DRILL

**B**Y NOW I was in my third year at the approved school and very happy with my job. I did scan the papers for other teaching positions from time to time but I have to admit my actions carried no real sincerity.

It was shortly after seven o'clock one morning and having already bathed I was now in the process of dressing for a new day. Knickers, girdle and fully-fashioned seamed stockings were now in place. I slid my arms into my bra straps and in one swift movement fastened the rear hooks and eyes.

Given my figure type I have always benefitted from a foundation garment which provides good support. At the time of my wedding, wasp waists were in vogue, and as part of my wedding ensemble I wore a corset. It was a white satin busk-fronted, heavily-boned, back lacing model which when laced tight provided me with a twenty inch waist and coupled with my form-fitting wedding dress gave a very pleasing and well-defined hourglass figure. However, although I have always enjoyed (and later required) the support a good foundation gives, wearing such a garment on a daily basis would have proved difficult, so my lacing corset was reserved during this time for special occasions only.

I did wear a girdle on a daily basis, like most women from that era and when I say "I looked five pounds thinner" older lady readers may recognise an advertising slogan and guess the name of one of the brands I wore. My girdle style changed over the years, first to that of a high line model, then to a high-line panty style and finally, to cope with a little middle age spread, to a panty corselette. Having commenced wearing foundation garments at an early age, I never found them to be uncomfortable to wear, and I do think they enhance many a woman's figure! However I have digressed.

The fire bell provided a sound one could not ignore and that morning caused me to quickly shed any last remnants of my previous night's slumber, as I reacted to its piercing clang. All staff were fully versed in our respective duties upon hearing this noise for a fire drill was practised at least once a year to keep everyone up to scratch in this regard. I had responsibility for our thirteen year olds and after quickly donning the first dress that came to hand to provide me with some decency, I

quickly scrambled out of my room and headed upstairs to the dormitory holding the girls for whom I was responsible. On my way I encountered other staff headed in the same direction to perform much the same function as myself, many of whom were in scantier attire. Morag was still in the process of slipping into her dress and I noticed her fine white underslip. Many comments were exchanged between us *en route*; but the only really meaningful one was ensuring our duty matron had raised the fire department by telephone. We all knew exactly what each of us had to do, and our minds were set on accomplishing our individual tasks.

I quickly reached my dormitory and was greeted by different reactions to the situation by different girls in my charge. Some realised the potential danger and were behaving in an admirable fashion, quickly donning basic clothes while encouraging others to emulate them. Others however seemed paralysed. Was it fear or something else? My raised voice however soon jolted the lethargic ones to action for I used the tone of command generally used by me prior to administering punishment. My voice cast in this manner was something all these girls were familiar with, and was something none of them dare ignore. This was the missing ingredient, and provided the necessary catalyst to spur the remaining girls to swift action. I ensured all were dressed and quickly had the girls form two lines before escorting all into the corridor and down the stairs. I made sure I was last to leave and while exhorting all girls in a loud voice not to run I did permit, and indeed encouraged, fairly swift movement by all of us.

When we reached the playground I had all my girls surround me and while many were anxious to talk with friends in other grade levels I vigorously discouraged such practice as it was imperative the girls remain together until we could call the roll, to ensure everyone was safe. (I did however understand their concern for their friends at this time, and felt the sentiment expressed entirely laudable, and spoke well of the level of humanity in all of us.)

Mrs. McEwan was soon on the scene, it being her task to bring a copy of the register for the entire school. This was quickly distributed to the form matrons and soon the voices of each grade level could be heard as girls across the age spectrum answered to their names. This whole process was completed in very short period of time and while I had my entire complement it soon became evident two girls were nowhere to be found. This represented a very serious and worrying circumstance. Mrs. McEwan declared her intent to re-enter the building to conduct a search and asked for one additional volunteer to assist her in this task. On hearing this I exchanged a quick glance with my close

friend Morag, our simultaneous nods confirmed we would both go and Morag very quickly informed Mrs. McEwan her rightful place was now in the playground to ensure the continued safety of the vast majority of our girls. Additionally she would be needed to ensure the fire department arrived and also to act in her capacity as leader in managing any other minor crises. (Both Morag and myself realised that our age and the respective age of the head, coupled with our agility in comparison to her should anything really nasty occur inside the building, gave us a far better chance of escape.)

Upon entering both Morag and myself could not detect any sign of fire and felt reasonably safe in conducting a search. We decided our best plan was to split up and Morag climbed the stairs, saying she would check the entire upstairs portion of the building. This area encompassed both the girls' dormitories and also the other indoor recreation areas enjoyed by our inmates. I confined myself to the downstairs portion, first checking our kitchen, although the early morning cooking staff were also outside in the playground and had stated nothing was amiss in the kitchen area. I was at a bit of a loss so I proceeded with a quick check of everything from classrooms and gymnasium to storage areas. I also checked the door of our punishment room and found it locked, as it should have been. On hearing no evidence of any sound from within I didn't bother to gain admission and I proceeded on with my inspection.

I reached our staff quarters and began checking inside each sanctuary. By now the bells of the fire engines could be heard and as I left Morag's room our missing fourteen year olds emerged two doors away. This was Angela's room and each girl carried in her arms a large quantity of tawses which they had obviously been in the process of collecting. The fire alarm was a hoax, and the perpetrators used it as a cover to attempt to collect many of our straps. (Just what they intended doing with them, or what they expected to accomplish, or how they expected to get away with this, I could not figure out.) However they had now been apprehended. Both had committed not merely one but several foolish, childish pranks; a veritable catalogue of offences against our rules. I thought to myself at this time, 'you two can thank your lucky stars I was the one to discover you.' For had it been Angela Bradley who had spotted them emerging from her room, I felt sure she would have been unable to prevent herself from inflicting personal retribution upon both of them at some later stage. The game was up for both girls and I knew their fate would be a sorry one!

"I wouldn't like to be in your shoes right now" I stated. "Now follow me immediately to the playground! Mrs. McEwan in case you girls

don't realise it, has been extremely worried about your safety since she discovered both of you missing." I had them deposit all the tawses on my bed on the way and I made sure the girls had not hidden any straps prior to my discovering them. I wanted to make sure I got my own straps back, before returning those belonging to other matrons for I had noticed both of my own straps had been removed from their traditional position behind my door. On our way to the playground I encountered Morag descending from upstairs and quickly outlined what had occurred asking her not to reveal what had happened to other staff members until we had both spoken to Mrs. McEwan. Morag concurred with my judgement in this regard.

When we returned to the playground we all headed towards Mrs. McEwan and the look of relief on her face at finding all of us safe was very evident and gratifying. She had indeed been intensely worried for the safety of all of us for the few minutes we were inside the building prior to our return. This fact was told to me by many of my peers later that day over tea in the staff room, for the events of the early morning provided the entire topic of conversation for the balance of that school day.

The firemen having arrived from a fair distance in a very prompt manner were now in the process of gathering up their hoses *et cetera*. The fire chief had checked the building and now conferred with Mrs. McEwan for his own satisfaction to ensure all was in order and the alarm had indeed been a false one. After having the major facts confirmed by Mrs. McEwan he asked me had one of the girls triggered the alarm. I answered in the affirmative.

"Yes, when we heard it was the reformatory, I couldn't help thinking it might be a prank; however we must respond when called. I suppose the actions of the girls will not go unpunished?" he ventured. And his expression led me to believe he expected a response from our staff which went well beyond that of mere admonition by way of words.

"I don't quite know yet, exactly how we will deal with them, but I think you can be reasonably sure both will have hands and bottoms resembling the colour of your fire engines before we finish with them." I stated.

"The strap?" he enquired.

"Yes," I responded. "A very thick one if I am not mistaken!"

"Serves the little beggars right, I have no sympathy for them. Although I am relieved it was only a false alarm," he concluded, and with that they left. However I must report from my memory the word used by our trusty fire chief to describe our reprobates was not beggars but one which sounds remarkably similar and was not usually heard by

ladies. Though I certainly took no offence from its use by him that day!

Mrs McEwan was still particularly overwrought and after profusely thanking both Morag and myself, she asked I accompany her and the girls to her office. Once inside she seemed to calm down considerably and announced since multiple infractions had occurred both girls would suffer multiple punishments as a consequence. With that statement she opened her desk drawer and extracted her thick tawse presenting the awesome strap to me.

"Miss McKenzie, would you please give these girls four strokes on each hand for being out of bounds and for the attempted pilfering of school property." I had them both line up and in turn extend crossed hands. Their actions were directed by commands issued by me in the voice I normally used when dispensing justice. This generated the correct impression for all parties. One of fear for the girls and a confirmation to the head she had made a wise decision.

I took my own sweet time and before commencing adjusted the height of the hands of my first victim. I was fully aware my actions were being observed by Mrs. McEwan. I was also cognisant of the end result desired by her. I laid it on in my very best fashion and both girls knew it! The outcome was everything the head desired. "Lochgelly justice" was well dispensed to both girls. The loud sound from the strokes of the tawse was accompanied by all the usual reactions from both girls. Neither remained silent throughout their ordeal and both clearly felt the pain I had generated for each of them. Tears accompanied each girl's distress and this was not eased by the news they would experience a painful session with the rattan cane across their knickers that evening for generating a false fire alarm.

Mrs. McEwan's final words to the girls went as follows, "Girls, in future if you feel you would like the strap there is no need to collect your own, just call on Miss McKenzie or myself, and we will be happy to oblige either of you with a stiff dose!" I felt sure we would not hear any such request from either of these girls!

After the girls had left Mrs. McEwan turned to me and said "Thanks Mary, I am so wound up right now, I don't think I could have adequately performed that little task!"

"Don't give it another thought. You know I am always happy to assist you in any way I can with any of your duties!" I stated. As I turned for the door I said, "Look on the bright side, at least we don't need to have a fire drill in the near future!"

"You're right, you know I never thought of that." And with that remark a smile returned to her face. As I left her office I sought the present time, but having no watch on my person, I had to ask another



matron I bumped into *en route* to my room. It was just eight o'clock and the day still lay ahead, though what had already been experienced that day at the reformatory seemed like a full day of events for all concerned.

Needless to say the school remained abuzz all day with talk of the early morning excitement. In our staff room I think everyone must have shared the experience of every other staff member as each told in turn how they had coped during the crisis. Additionally in class that day before lessons commenced I allowed some discussion among the girls of earlier events. I tried to use this period in a constructive manner to praise the behaviour of all present and to recognise the many correct actions taken by the girls earlier that day. I also used the session to try to point out areas for improvement and to re-state the very real danger of fire in surroundings such as our own, and the very foolish nature of deliberate false alarms.

I also realised that had I not taken this approach that a veritable stream of girls would have been summoned by me to the front of my classroom for punishment that day for inattention, and talking in class. For the girls themselves, just like the staff, could not contain themselves, and each had something to say about the morning's events. Many "oh'd" and "ah'd" with excitement at further details provided by me of the action.

When I finally reached the conclusion of what I had to say, one saucy young minx commented, "And you strapped the pair of them really hard!"

"Yes I did, and if we don't soon get our lessons underway, I fear Mrs. McEwan might come along and give me the strap for not doing my job!" This remark drew some laughter, a thing that was seldom present in class, but which I liked to encourage from time to time as a healthy outlet, as long as it did not interfere with the strict discipline which I enforced.

Later that day I spent part of my lunch break sorting through the large number of straps which now adorned my bed and having retrieved my own, I then had our staff call one by one to collect their missing property. Though our straps were all very similar, only really being differentiated by length and weight, each one was indeed in some way unique. It therefore did not surprise me that each teacher could readily identify her own.

Angela Bradley was called upon to do the honours that evening and both girls suffered twelve strokes on the knickered bottom with the rattan cane from her skilful right arm. The following day I overheard a comment from one of our young madams which ran as follows: "The

belt from McKenzie, and the cane from Bradley in the same day! What could be worse?" What indeed!

"Please miss, can I go to the toilets?" This was a much used request and usually signalled an urgent call of nature for a girl during class. However it was often used as a ploy by girls to obtain some unsupervised time which in turn enabled them to engage in all sorts of mischief. It was difficult to know just how to deal with this request. Girls were expected to attend to this need during break, but the number of toilets available would not accommodate all girls during the relatively short morning and afternoon break periods. I also found very infrequently I had to leave my class for the same reason, so I sympathised with the girls.

The quandary faced by all matrons was whether to allow a girl to go on her own or whether it was better to ask another girl to go with her to ensure the swift return of both parties to class. I favoured the unsupervised method and relied upon the girl herself to quickly return to class and not to engage in any mischief. Some girls used this avenue as an opportunity to smoke, though it could be risky for it was not unusual for a girl who was suspected of being a smoker to have her breath examined after returning to class. I closely monitored which girls requested to leave my class and unless I felt I was receiving too many requests from the same person I granted leave and assumed the reason was justified.

Margaret Bridgett had left my class under this pretence and I had not paid enough attention to the passage of time. My lesson on Scottish geography had been going very well, and the girls had been performing well above average in answering my questions. I was very pleased and continued in this vein since I seemed to have the complete attention of every girl in my class. I was brought back to earth by a polite knock at the door prior to Morag entering with my missing charge.

"I think this young lady belongs in here!" said Morag.

"Yes, she does!" I responded. "Where did you find her?"

"I found her coming out of Angela Bradley's room, and I don't think she had any right to be there," stated Morag.

"No, she certainly had not! Leave it to me, and I will deal with her!" I responded.

"I also found this tack on Angela's chair set as a booby trap. However, Margaret assures me there are no others, so I thought it best for Margaret, if I leave it in your hands. No need for Angela to find out!" And with that remark Morag left.

I waited till my class had ended before addressing Margaret. She stood before me on the floor and I watched her rub her sweaty palms

on her gymslip in dread anticipation of what would follow. I had taken my XH Lochgelly from my desk and it now lay on top of my desk while I tallied the consequences.

“Two strokes for the booby trap and four strokes for being out of bounds and two strokes for lying to me about needing the toilet, and you get them all right now, or I can report the matter to Miss Bradley and let her deal with you.” The girl did not take long to make up her mind and settled for “McKenzie justice!” I picked up my tawse. “Oh please miss, can I have them on my bum instead?” This request caught me slightly by surprise, but I quickly responded.

“Yes, you can. I will deal with you this evening in the punishment room at 7.50 p.m. before regular punishment parade.” With that the girl departed.

That evening minus knickers Margaret had her eight strokes on the bottom from my three-tailed tawse and appeared to take them better than the “palmies” I had given her some four months before in my class. Many girls found the tawse easier to take on the bottom than on the hand. This phenomenon always surprised me, for although a stranger to this, I always imagined a stroke on the bottom as seeming far worse than one on the palm!

## CHAPTER 8

### CONTINUING EVENTS

**D**URING my fourth year at the approved school, Mrs. McEwan arrived at my classroom one day with a new girl of thirteen years of age. Sandra Finnegan looked vaguely familiar to me and her name rang a bell. This was not the first time I had encountered that surname within our walls. A certain Margaret Finnegan spent two years with us before her release some twenty months earlier. Before I could elicit further details Mrs. McEwan had departed from the scene and I was left for the time being with my own speculation.

I continued with the day's lesson but when it ended I decided to spend five minutes with our new girl during which I broached the topic directly.

"Sandra, perhaps you would like to tell me why you have been sent here!"

"Please, miss, I was caught shoplifting when I should have been at school," she replied.

"Do you by any chance have a sister named Margaret?" I enquired.

"Yes, miss." she replied.

"Did your sister spend some time at this school two years ago?"

"Yes miss."

"I thought your name was familiar to me. Did your sister tell you about this place, and the standard of behaviour we expect from girls in here?"

"She did talk to me about this school."

"Did she tell you what befalls wicked, disobedient girls in here?" I enquired. She eyed me warily and hesitated in responding. "Let me show you something." I opened the lid of my desk and extracted my XH Lochgelly. "Did your sister tell you about this?" She eyed the strap warily, and not knowing what would happen next paused to consider her response very carefully. Unknown to her, I did not intend to punish her, having no just reason to do so. "Your sister was no stranger to this tawse, and in case she did not tell you about me and my strap, I can assure you this strap is very painful, it really stings, and I don't hesitate to use it on naughty girls! I don't know what your sister may have told you, but make no mistake, girl, in here you will obey the rules, or else!" And with that I swished my tawse through the air, to demon-



strate the consequences. My elaborate theatre was not lost on Sandra and although not the brightest of children, she was generally very well behaved in my classroom and avoided experiencing my strap until one fateful day.

I left my class for two minutes but before leaving issued my usual warning regarding any misbehaviour during my absence. When I returned Sandra was out of her seat and the blackboard duster was in her hand. In addition some chalk dust was evident on her gymslip. The girl paled visibly as I entered the room. Much of the material I had written for that day's lesson had been erased from the blackboard. I was initially surprised to discover just who the culprit was, but quickly responded. "Well my girl, just you stay exactly where you are and I will warm your fingers!"

Gosh, I now really sounded like some of my own teachers, for this was an expression used by many of them. I don't know exactly where or when its genesis occurred but many women teachers I had experienced were prone to use that very expression. It was sometimes given as a threat as in: 'Stop that at once or I will warm your fingers!' or in command form as in 'Come out here, and I will warm your fingers.' A curious little expression for a dose of the strap! And there were many others too! 'Come out here, and I will make your fingers tingle!' This was another expression employed by a schoolmistress from my own schooldays. However I could never really appreciate or figure this one out. I often wondered if this woman had ever had the strap when she had been a child? Or what her teachers were about, if her own recollections of punishment by way of the tawse prompted the word 'tingle'! For this word did not seem to me even remotely appropriate to describe the "sensations" I experienced after feeling a tawse.



*Use of the strap across rather than along the palm: Mistress stands to the side*

I must say I thought of more dramatic phrases and the words “terrible agony” or “fearful sting” or “atrocious throbbing” I think reflect my own memories far better. If I had merely experienced a tingle in my fingers I would have been a far happier pupil on the relatively few but memorable occasions during my childhood on which I felt the sting of a tawse! Leaving Mrs. Morrison’s classroom that memorable day many words crossed my mind to describe the incredible pain I suffered, but I must admit “tingle” was not one of them. Additionally I don’t think any girl feeling the strap from me would have described one of my ‘special strokes from my extra heavyweight tawse’ as having merely induced a tingle in her hand! (Perhaps one of Bridie’s pain killers is the missing ingredient in the equation here!) However back to Sandra.

I proceeded to my desk and Sandra fully realising the consequences quickly began to plead. “Please miss, it wasn’t me!” Having extracted my favourite tawse, I turned to the class and asked if another culprit would like to own up? No response. “Well, Sandra you are the one holding the evidence. Put down the duster and hold out your hands!” I ordered.

“Oh , please miss, it really wasn’t me.”

“Just who was it then?” I enquired. Some fidgeting, but no reply from Sandra. “Very well, cross your hands girl!” She quickly did as she was bid, and at that time I felt she was the one responsible. She appeared to be quite nervous and no doubt reflected about my earlier theatrics and what would now follow for her. I decided to confirm her worst fears and laid on six painful strokes in my usual style. Sandra

responded in a manner which showed she had felt every one of them. She returned to her seat looking very morose and as I returned my trusty strap to my desk I noticed she glared through her tears at another girl, Ann Wilson. I now had reason to doubt my hasty action.

The class continued without any further incident but at its conclusion as the girls were leaving I noticed another girl also bore some evidence of chalk on her gymslip. "Ann Wilson, come over here!" I ordered. "Sandra Finnegan, also remain behind! Just what is that on your clothes, girl?" I asked Ann. The girl flushed as she spotted the white telltale evidence to which I pointed.

"I don't know, miss," was all she could utter.

"I think you do, and you will not leave this room until you tell me exactly how that chalk got on your gymslip!" She spluttered, but quickly realised her game was up, and lying would not help her at this stage. The sooner she made a clean breast of it the better it would be for her.

"Yes miss, I wiped your writing from the board," she confessed.

"Was Sandra involved?" I asked.

"No, miss," was her reply.

"Then why did you not own up when I asked the class earlier, and why did you implicate Sandra?"

"She annoyed me this morning and I wanted to get her back!" she stated. I now realised my earlier mistake and was very angry with this girl. There can be few harsher things in life than to be accused and punished for a crime which one did not commit.

I quickly considered my options. A good dose of the reformatory strap on the bottom was what was warranted here, but I was not the assigned matron for punishment duty that evening. I asked both girls to remain in my classroom while I quickly went to my own room and collected my reformatory grade tawse. Having returned I administered eight of the very best to Ann's crossed hands and had Sandra witness the event. I turned to Ann and despite her evident distress and the tears she now shed I had her apologise to Sandra. I also apologised to Sandra for my earlier hasty decision. Though it seldom happened, mistakes in assigning blame did occur and the wrong girl suffered the consequences as a result. Teachers are also human and are not infallible, after all. The two girls hugged each other and made up. Despite their red faces and hands, they departed from my room friends once again. All's well that ends well! I felt somewhat less troubled by my earlier mistake in awarding punishment, for my action had brought both girls together again!

The tawse had a certain magical power and sometimes it created new friendships, when girls were punished together. Or brought ani-

mosity between girls to an end. The next worse thing to getting the strap was to see one's own chums punished in this manner. However, many girls liked nothing better than to see adversaries suffer, and many would try to bring this very fate upon their enemies.

As far as the incident itself was concerned I must admit I admired the speed and boldness of its execution. Ann had apparently dashed from her seat following my departure, had rubbed out much of my blackboard writing with the duster and while returning to her own seat deposited the duster in Sandra's lap. Thereby ensuring a good quantity of chalk dust adhered to Sandra's clothing. Sandra having few options had left her seat to get rid of the duster only to be confronted by her worst nightmare. My return!

Morag and I were very good friends during the entire time I spent at the approved school and thereafter and I certainly did not harbour any resentment toward her for the stroke of the strap which I had received from her on my first day. It was difficult given the different hours and shifts we could be asked to work to hold onto boyfriends for it took a fair amount of commitment on their part to accept the fact many weekends one would have to work and therefore not be available for dates. Additionally in the environment in which we worked we seldom met any men. I think some of the young firemen who had attended our false alarm were ogled by the single members of our staff and a few of the older inmates. Additionally I think many on our staff would have been more than happy had the situation been more serious just to experience some male company for a little while longer.

Morag and I occasionally double-dated and while I met the man I eventually married, my husband John, during this period, I also hoped Morag might find similar romance and happiness, for she has always been a very nice person.

For a period of time she did have a young chap named Angus, and I hoped a serious relationship between them might develop but they broke up and Morag would not talk to me about it except to say she had broken it off. This statement of course only prompted further enquiry on my part, as I sought to find information regarding the reason for their break up. I hoped it might allow me to play cupid and bring them back together again. So to finally shut me up on this topic one evening when we were alone together Morag told all.

Angus it appeared, unlike my boyfriend John, was always asking Morag, when they were alone on dates, to tell in great detail, of what went on behind the walls of our school. It did not take long for Morag to detect that the details Angus liked best were those of punishment for our inmates. This all meant little to me. I was really quite naive at that



time and knew nothing in this regard, but Morag quickly detected this lad's true character and when he told her one evening that from time to time he was a naughty boy and perhaps Morag should deal appropriately with him, she decided to end their relationship. Morag felt his interest in her as a person was outweighed by his interest in other things which included certain aspects of our job! On hearing this I decided to abide by her decision and let matters rest.

In my own mind I wondered at that time if Angus had ever really been punished as a boy? By that I don't mean just one or two strokes of the tawse. For I felt sure had he received a more severe punishment as a boy, six strokes from a heavy Lochgelly for example, this kind of fantasy would hold little appeal. I also thought had Morag indulged his fantasy just once he would not have ever raised the issue again. Six on each hand from Morag from one of our heaviest straps was a prospect no one could relish and I am sure would have banished such thoughts from the mind of Angus forever!

At that moment in my mind's eye the ludicrous picture emerged of Angus in schoolboy uniform including short trousers standing before Morag with both arms extended and hands crossed. As the mental images unfolded in my mind Morag plied one of our reformatory grade straps to his outstretched hands and Angus fairly hopped from one foot to the other as he felt the effect of the strokes. Morag was laying on some of the special strokes she held in reserve for our worst offenders as Angus let out a fair number of squeals and exhibited all the usual characteristics of a youngster undergoing sound punishment. My goodness, the imagination is a strange thing and I have now shared mine with the reader on at least a couple of occasions. I do not under any circumstances take my own too seriously. Therefore those readers who feel I may be in need of the psychiatrist's couch should have few concerns on my account.

In contrast, my own husband John, was not remotely interested in the details of my job, and really did not want me to tell him much about it. This suited me just fine as it gave me a complete break from the environment in which I lived much of my life. I think as a result our relationship was much stronger and am happy to say it has stood the test of time!

I have tried to recount approved school life as I knew it at that time, particularly from the aspect of discipline. I have tried to provide from my memories examples of the use of corporal punishment during the six years I spent there. I felt to be effective corporal punishment must be very painful for the recipient. The least effective use of corporal punishment I believe is when the punishment is not severe enough and

is laughed or shrugged off as being of no consequence. I therefore generally punished quite severely or not at all. I tried to match my punishments to the age and size of the recipient and also to her tolerance for pain. Tolerance to pain is something which could vary quite radically from girl to girl, although many of our inmates were pretty tough customers, and it generally took severe punishment to change them. Each year I spent there was similar and though the faces changed from year to year, the traits in the girls were easily recognisable, and changed little. Each generation of children are much the same.

Girls arrived in our care because of a lack of discipline within their lives. We certainly provided that for them. If they failed to respond to requests given in English, we also spoke another language known as corporal punishment. One, I might add, understood by all children. No girls ever returned to our care after release, so I believe the system worked very well. They were sorry to leave friendships made with other girls but no doubt were glad to see the back of the staff. Especially myself and Angela Bradley.

The girls had nicknames for many of the staff just as we did as schoolgirls during our own schooldays. Following the Margaret Finnegan and Theresa McGinty episode I believe I was known among some of the girls as "the wicked witch." Though woe betide any girl I caught using those words about me. Nicknames of any staff member repeated in my earshot earned the girl in question six of the very best. Angela Bradley enjoyed the largest number of nicknames of any teacher I have ever known. Many of them were much less complimentary than witch, and in deference to Angela (whom I believe to be still alive) I will not repeat them at this time.

When girls were sentenced to approved school in my time unlike former times corporal punishment was not specifically included in the sentence. I read in a very old journal dealing with a much earlier period in time of a thirteen year old maid who had stolen a sovereign from her mistress being sentenced to two years in a Scottish reformatory and upon arrival at her destination to twenty strokes of the superintendent's heaviest tawse. However in my day I imagine few girls managed to make it through their sentence without feeling the tawse at least once. I know many felt it often, particularly toward the beginning of a girl's sentence when she could be very troublesome. Given the frequency of use of the tawse in the school systems of Scotland during my own childhood it was difficult for a child to avoid receiving it at least once during their school life which for some pupils could be as long as twelve years.

Approved schools at this time were located all over Great Britain. Each large city or group of cities was sure to have one close by. However in relation to other types of schools they were very few in number, especially those designated for girls. Just the existence of the approved school and the strict discipline each dispensed was well known to the population in general. In relation to the overall child population very few children ever saw the inside of its walls. I might add however approved schools had a very positive effect on the juvenile delinquency rate of that period. For very few youngsters indeed were keen to make our acquaintance and those who were incarcerated seldom returned to our "tender care". The disciplinary methods used at the approved school were well disseminated to other children by the unfortunate few who spent time within our walls. Approved schools proved to be a very cost efficient means of maintaining a very low crime rate amongst juveniles and consequently relatively few children of that era graduated to an adult life of crime.

I married and left the service when expecting my first child. One of the advantages of my job and the inevitable way of life it produced meant I was able to save a fair amount of money quite quickly. This provided a degree of financial security and, coupled with the income which would be provided from my future husband's job, allowed John and myself to make swift wedding plans, without the necessity of a really long courtship which many other less fortunate couples were forced to endure. Following our marriage, I was blessed with two girls of my own.

When I left the approved school Mrs. McEwan suggested I keep my tawses, all save the most severe. It was becoming difficult to obtain new straps as thick as our reformatory grade tawses and Mrs. McEwan asked me to leave mine for others to use. I did not see my ever having a further use for a strap of such thickness. She said I might return to teaching one day, and I was glad of her advice, for I did, and I found a later use for all of my other straps; some even within my own home.

## CHAPTER 9

### RETURN TO THE CLASSROOM

I RETURNED to teaching in the early sixties. I obtained a position at a mixed junior secondary school, and taught girls from twelve to fifteen. The teacher I replaced had left the profession and the children were from a working class neighbourhood, and fairly tough. Before commencing my duties, the headmaster told me that my predecessor had not coped well and my previous experience at dealing with badly behaved girls had been a big factor in his selecting me for the job.

On my first day I noticed a possible problem. The teacher's desk in my classroom contained a thin tawse of indeterminable origin which showed signs of use. However in my opinion it seemed only suited to much younger children and had probably been made for use in a primary school. It did not favourably compare in severity to any of my "Lochgellies". I spent the first day merely observing, but felt a lack of respect was shown toward me by many pupils I encountered.

That evening at home after putting both girls to bed my husband asked me how my first day back at school had gone.

"Oh pretty well, although the children seem to me badly behaved and lacking in discipline. That reminds me!" I went to a cupboard and opening it looked for my tawses which had been stored away since my approved school days. My husband John had not seen my straps before and as I produced them, he exclaimed, "Where did you get those?"

"I've had them for years, since my approved school days," I replied.

"Brrr, those bring back some unpleasant memories. I think I met several just like those at school," and having said this, John playfully blew into his cupped palms.

"So you had a few experiences with the strap during your school-days!" I remarked.

"More than my fair share as I recall," he said.

"You are just the fellow I am looking for! I am out of practice. Would you mind acting as a pupil for me for just six strokes?" I asked. Did my husband notice the twinkle in my eye? He watched as I placed the thick Lochgelly over my shoulder and adjusting the position of my feet, I adopted my strapping position.

"I've just remembered I have some work to do on the car and it will take me till bedtime at least to finish." And with that remark my hus-

band quickly made his exit. Before returning John ensured my straps were safely out of sight. My lighter tawses returned to the cupboard. However I carefully packed my extra heavy two-tailed Lochgelly in the large shoulder bag I would be taking to school the following day.

Day two. I waited until my form had settled at their desks. A fair amount of noise could be heard from them. I took the thin strap from the desk and that attracted every one's attention. My next move was to place the strap at the back of my cupboard and lock the cupboard. I believe this action of mine caused some pupils to think I would not use corporal punishment, and that I had discarded the strap as a means of discipline. I noticed two girls wink at each other.

"Settle down!" I called, and proceeded to mark the roll. Sure enough I had not got beyond ten minutes of the first lesson and was writing on the blackboard, when I heard a commotion start. Some horseplay was in motion from the same two girls in question. I turned around, and even as I watched the pair of them, their antics continued.

"What sort of behaviour are you girls engaging in? Is that any way to conduct yourselves in class?" I had their attention. "Did Mrs. Morrison allow that sort of behaviour?"

"No, miss."

"Well, neither do I! Out to the front, both of you!"

The girls swaggered out and the class looked on, no doubt speculating just what would happen next. I should add my predecessor, Mrs. Morrison was not my former English teacher. If she had been I doubt I would have witnessed such behaviour from these pupils. Would I merely lecture these girls? Or would I give them lines to write out? Or would I send them to the headmaster? Or would I retrieve the old strap? I opened my large shoulder bag and produced my twin-tailed extra heavyweight Lochgelly. The smug look on their faces soon changed.

"Cross your hands, Elsie!" She did. The tawse was over my shoulder and I took my time lining myself up.

I hadn't really done this for some years and wondered if I would be out of practice? I drew with force, in my usual style and the strap cracked home with a loud wallop! The look on the girl's face confirmed my thoughts. Her expression showed she had felt that one! She assumed more strokes would follow and had changed hands. Her decision did not influence my intended course of action and I struck the second stroke. She said nothing but her face showed a pained expression and she dropped her hands and started to turn.

"Just where are you going girl? I have not finished with you yet!" I growled.

"Oh, please ....., Mrs. Morrison only gave us two strokes when we misbehaved."

"Well, you are getting four from me. Get your hands up again at once!" Thwack!

"Ooh!" Crack! "Aargh"

"Stand over there. You, next girl. Cross your hands!" Thwack!, Crack! "Change hands, girl." Thwack! Thwack!

"Aaargh."

"Return to your seats." To the class, I said, "That was a standard punishment, and if any of you misbehave in my class you will receive a minimum of four strokes from my Lochgelly!" The class looked on in silence with heads lowered and I placed my tawse in my desk. Giving the strap is like riding a bike, you never do lose the touch. And I thought to myself, this class is "under new management!"

The following Saturday after lunch my husband helped me with the washing up. We watched our two daughters through the window as they played in the garden.

"How was your first week at school? Did you use that thick strap of yours?" John asked.

"As a matter of fact I did, and things have already shown improvement in the behaviour department."

My husband and I had never spoken of straps or punishment before, even during our courting days. I had always just assumed he would understand that as a teacher I had access to and used such items.

"You know I have never thought of my sweet, loving Mary as a belter of schoolchildren before, but when I saw you the other night with those straps you reminded me of some of my own teachers and you looked as though you meant business! A certain schoolmistress who taught my class used to give very painful strokes with a strap very similar to the one you held the other night." My husband had obviously been well disciplined during his schooldays and this was a revelation to me.

I responded with, "Another school teacher, who's standing very close to you right now, knows just how to emulate that woman!"

"I guess that means no more excuses from me when you ask for help around the house," he said with a smile.

"I should think not," I replied. "I have a cure in that cupboard for laziness which works just as well for husbands as naughty girls or boys!" And with that we both laughed. I must say my husband has always been good around the house and even without the "threat from a strap" he has always helped with the household tasks.

The headmaster approached me during my third month of teaching and asked if we could have a talk. He asked how things were going and I replied that all was well. He had noticed an improvement in behaviour among the girls and also in the academic results from the classes in their mid-term exams.

"How did you manage it," he asked.

"Oh, with a lot of hard work on my part and a strip of leather," I said. Realisation dawned on his face

"Oh, you mean a tawse, but Mrs. Morrison also tried that approach."

"Well, perhaps not just any tawse." I opened my desk and produced my "Lochgelly". He took in its length and thickness and nodded approvingly.

"Yes, that should command their attention," he said.

"And their respect," I hastily added.

"Keep up the good work," was his final statement and then he departed and this issue was closed at least for the time being.

He did however approach me the following year. He asked me to help a new lady teacher at our school who had moved to Scotland from England with her husband when her husband had been transferred north of the border by his employer. Prior to joining our staff she had taught at a fairly good school for girls in the south of England and was unused to the class of girl at our school and the behavioural problems which could ensue. She was not coping well with our girls and the headmaster said she had already sent several girls to him for punishment.

"You know I don't like having to strap teenage girls. I will do it if absolutely necessary, but I prefer my staff to exert their own authority in the classroom. Mary, will you please talk to her and straighten things out? Find out if she has a strap, and if she knows how to use it." I agreed, and arranged to speak with her after four o'clock.

I asked Penelope how discipline had been maintained at her last school. "Well if a girl misbehaved she could be given lines to write out or detentions and as a final resort she could be sent to our headmistress for the cane. But that seldom happened."

"How have you dealt with the girls who have misbehaved in class since you arrived here?"

"I told some of the younger ones to stand in a corner and gave others lines to write out. When they failed to complete the lines I sent the girls to our headmaster," answered Penelope.

"Well, Penelope, while I appreciate your philosophy and do not question your motives, with the type of girls we have at this school

that's not very effective. The headmaster cannot be called upon by every teacher in this school to provide discipline for the pupils. He has asked me to talk with you, as your method of disciplining girls cannot continue. Have you ever given any girl corporal punishment, my dear?" I asked.

"No," she replied.

"Well, Penelope, we don't use the cane in Scotland, but we have got something just as effective, called a tawse." I produced my Lochgelly and showed it to her. "This is how we maintain discipline in Scottish schools. Have you one of these in your classroom?"

"No. I have never seen anything that looked like that before."

"Well, what do you think of this strap?" She eyed the object with what can only be described as distaste, and it was obvious to me she had yet to form an opinion of the strap. I said to her, "Since I don't have any other option I will have to demonstrate its use on you. Penelope, cross your hands!" She did not understand my command, and I had to lift her hands to the required position myself. I placed the tawse over my shoulder and struck with slightly less force than normal. Her response was close to a scream and she bent clutching her sore palm. The look she gave me defies description and I said "I am sorry but I thought it best to make this as realistic as possible."

"That d—n well hurt!" said Penelope.

"Yes, it's supposed to hurt. But I can assure you it is very effective. Girls think twice about their behaviour after they feel a tawse or know their teacher has one and will use it. I think, if you are to continue at this school, you had best get yourself a good strap, and learn very quickly how to use it," I replied.

"Where does one get a strap, and what do you ask for?" she ventured.

"School straps are made by many saddlers in Scotland, but I recommend you telephone John J. Dick, in Lochgelly, Fife. Order a two-tailed extra heavyweight school strap and you should receive a tawse just like this one." I showed her the name on my strap and also the XH marking. "Until you get a tawse send any girls who misbehave to me and I will deal with them."

Sure enough two days after that conversation I had to interrupt my teaching to strap two of Penelope's girls. Why didn't our headmaster deal with this issue prior to hiring her? Any Scots teacher would not have presented this problem. Show me a Scot from that era who is unfamiliar with the tawse!

About a week later Penelope arrived at our school with a long narrow brown paper parcel. Opening it in our staff room she displayed to



me her new Lochgelly. It was slightly shorter than my own but just about as thick, and looked as if it would be quite adequate.

"It's very stiff," said Penelope.

"Yes, they are all stiff when new. It will become a little more supple through use. But do not fold it or roll it up. Put it in your desk just as it is," I said. "Give naughty girls two strokes for most infractions and if someone is really badly behaved, four strokes and in exceptional circumstances, six of the best." I told her to take a few practice strokes before entering class and I then gave her the benefit of my own experience and further advice on strapping. Later that day from the classroom next to mine I heard the sound of Penelope's new tawse at work.

Penelope sought me out several days later in our staff room. "You were right, it does work wonders. I can't believe the difference in the girls' behaviour!" She saw my puzzled look. "The strap I got, it was just what I needed."

"Oh that, glad to be of assistance," I hastily added. Penelope never looked back and taught at that school for a further six years.

I returned to my classroom unexpectedly one lunch hour to find the door unlocked, which was strange, for I was sure I had locked it. Two girls whom I had recently punished were inside, tinkering with my desk. Though they had somehow gained entry to the classroom, they had been unable to open my desk. In frustration one was attempting to extract my tawse via an opening on top of the high desk designed to accommodate an inkwell. The dimensions of my tawse were causing some difficulty in this matter for although they had been able to catch hold of the handle end of the strap the rest of the tawse would not bend sufficiently to follow.

"Just what do you two girls think you are doing, and how did you get into my classroom?" I snarled.

They both paled but attempted no response.

"I will be charitable, and assume you both enjoyed the last strapping I gave you so much you would now like another one!

"Elizabeth, cross your hands!"

She did as she was bid, while I unlocked my desk and removed my strap. I was relieved to find it showed no apparent damage from the recent contortions it had been subjected to. I raised my trusty strap and laid on a sound stroke. The girl gasped and tucked her punished hand under her arm. "Get those hands back in position, right one on top," I growled. She obeyed. I laid on my second stroke. She again gasped, and fairly hopped on one foot. "Left one on top again!" I said. She obeyed. My third stroke drove home with a loud wallop! The girl let out a pained howl and now doubled up. The message was getting

through! "Right one on top again," I ordered. The girl very reluctantly obeyed, and her reaction to this stroke told me she had had more than enough!

"Did you like those?" I enquired. Through her tears she shook her head.

"Do you need some more?" A vigorous shaking of the head was accompanied by, "Oh please, no more!"

"Stand over there, then!" I ordered, as I pointed to a spot a few feet away with my tawse.

"Now you, young madam," I said to her accomplice.

She crossed her hands and endured a similar four strokes well delivered by me. Her reaction matched that of her chum and at the conclusion of my efforts both girls showed clearly they had learned their lesson.

"How did you get into this room for I know I locked it before I left for lunch?" I enquired. Veronica, the second girl, produced a key very similar to my own which had been used to open the door. The key opened the front door of Veronica's house and so I could not confiscate it. Though it was not an identical match it did prove sufficiently close to the one I carried to allow the girls, following some tinkering, access to the classroom.

I decided to borrow some lines used by my former head matron following a similar offence at the approved school. "Well girls, no need to go to all this trouble if you ever feel you would like the strap. Just let me know, and I will be happy to oblige you, with as many strokes as you would like," I concluded.

The look I got told all, and both girls departed from my classroom well chastened. Though they returned for obligatory lessons at my hands, neither girl ever suggested by word or deed, they wished to again experience my leather! And I am happy to say neither girl ever did!

## CHAPTER 10

### A PARENT'S PROTEST

Penelope taught in the classroom next to mine and as the walls were fairly thin the sound of a tawse used in one classroom would faintly travel through to the next. Therefore either one of us would sometimes be aware when the other used her strap. Straps seemed to get most use at the beginning of a school year; when a teacher is confronted with new pupils. The long summer holidays coupled with "new teacher" syndrome sometimes brought out the worst in pupils and this only abated after the strap had been used a number of times.

I did get the opportunity to see Penelope and her strap in action. At a staff meeting some of our teachers complained about habitual late arrival by a group of pupils and this problem seemed to be growing. It was not a problem with my form and I wondered if my colleagues were dealing appropriately with the offenders when they eventually arrived in class. I remembered how when I had been a schoolgirl, pupils arriving late had been caught and suggested a similiar solution. The headmaster readily agreed and Penelope and myself were delegated to handle the girls.

Next morning at five minutes to nine o'clock Penelope and myself, each with strap in hand, proceeded to the girls' entrance. We took up position in a recess and waited until all classes had filed in. Sure enough shortly after nine o'clock the stragglers began to arrive. The look of surprise shown by each when confronted by us had to be seen to be appreciated. They had not been expecting this. Penelope took the first five girls to arrive late to one side and after ascertaining no girl had a valid excuse, commenced dealing with the late arrivals. Two strokes were given to each girl. Penelope and myself had previously agreed this course of action. I continued to assemble further late arrivals as Penelope's tawse handed out it's painful message. I watched her action and was impressed. She knew how to strap!

It was not long before I also had five girls to deal with and I commenced operations in a like manner to my colleague. After punishment the girls were free to proceed to their respective forms and they wandered off blowing on punished palms. As they ascended the stairs the topic of conversation among many centred around what had just occurred and I did hear the words "police brutality" but luckily for the individual concerned I could not readily identify the culprit who had

spoken those words, for I was in just the mood to give her some real "police brutality!"

By nine twenty we thought all must have arrived, however I had a feeling I had heard a noise outside the door when I had been strapping the last of my batch and I asked Penelope to return to her classroom while I lingered on. The sound of Penelope's heels made a fair amount of noise on the stairs and as the sound receded I waited and watched. Sure enough about two minutes later the door very quietly opened and a thirteen year old girl whom I recognised, named Marjorie Green, entered. She was just in the process of literally creeping up the stairs when her progress was halted by my raised voice.

"Just where do you think you are going, young lady?" She almost jumped out of her skin, and immediately burst into her prearranged excuse for her lateness. I did not accept her excuse, and she quickly realised it.

"I don't believe a word of what you have just said! And I intend to contact your mother right now by telephone." That statement by me brought about a very quick change of direction and Marjorie freely admitted her story was not true, and she had no genuine excuse for her late arrival. "Very well, cross your hands, girl!" I placed my tawse over my shoulder and struck my first stroke. It was a good one and she knew it. She changed hands and I delivered my second. The girl's hands fell and with a very pained look she turned to go.

"Where do you think you are going?" I said.

"Oh, please miss, you only gave the other girls two!" She blurted out, not fully considering the consequences of such a statement.

"So you were outside the door earlier, I thought so! You have been punished for late arrival," I said. "Now you will be punished for trying to evade punishment and lying to me. Get you hands back up, girl!" Thwack!

"Aah!"

"Change hands girl!" Thwack!

"Aargh!" Marjorie bent over clutching her very sore palms. They would remain so for a good part of this schoolgirl's day! The problem of pupils arriving late for school was very quickly terminated.

During my third year back in harness I inherited a particularly wild girl who caused minor disruption to class routine and, as I subsequently found out, was prone to bully those younger or smaller. I have a particular dislike of bullies and never regretted giving them a taste of their own medicine. I tried particularly hard to motivate Irene Dunn and sought to find an area of interest which could be exploited to help change her wild behaviour and ways. My appeals and other ploys

enjoyed no success as I struggled to find some method to reach this girl.

One lunch hour the headmaster sent for me and asked I come immediately to his study. Irene Dunn was present and in addition another younger smaller girl anxiously waited. I noted the younger girl showed evidence of having cried and wondered just what was up. Our headmaster dismissed Moira, the younger girl, and told her she could return to the playground. He then informed me of Irene's reign of terror over young Moira spanning several weeks, enforced by way of a protection racket, which had drained the youngster's last penny and left her in fear and terror of attending school. The headmaster had finally been informed following a particularly nasty beating given to Moira by Irene for her failure to deliver any cash.

I was appalled by this story and hardly credited what I was hearing. It sounded more in keeping with what one might expect at this time in urban America, but hardly seemed to reflect the value of life in Scotland or indeed any part of the United Kingdom. Was this what our country was coming to in the nineteen sixties? The headmaster, because of his dislike of having to dispense appropriate justice to the girls, had summoned me. He now asked if I would deal with her and based upon the story of her crime I was more than happy to dispense justice. Should I punish her now, or wait till after school? No time like the present, I thought!

I asked Irene to accompany me back to my empty classroom. Irene well knew what was about to transpire and from her knowledge of me from class also knew no amount of pleading could alter events. She had already seen but had not felt my strap during the lessons which I had previously conducted with her class.

After we had entered my room, I closed the door behind us and proceeded to my desk. I asked her to follow to a spot in the centre of the floor. I unlocked and opened my desk, and withdrew my strap. Irene was one step closer to her impending fate. She eyed my strap and, following my instructions, crossed her hands. I thought if I introduced an element of the unknown it might prove useful so my first stroke was not laid on with my usual magnitude. Her eyes showed however she had felt my stroke and now I had her change hands. I delivered a second stroke slightly harder and she let out a gasp before dropping her hands.

"Left one again!" I commanded. Irene had hoped her ordeal was already over, but two strokes hardly seemed ample reward for the pain and suffering she had caused Moira. Reluctantly her hands rose to the required position once again. I drew slightly harder once again.

"Aaah!" was her response.

"Change hands, girl!" was my next command. She did as she was

bid with a great deal of reluctance. Her right hand was treated to a similar stroke. Again she made a noise, only this time "Aaargh!" more closely resembles her response.

"Your left one again," I indicated. Realisation now dawned for Irene. No mistake, she was getting six!

"Oh please, that's enough, no more," was her exclamation.

"You may think you deserve no more, but I intend giving you six strokes and that's what you will get. Now raise your hand or there will be more trouble in store for you." After some threat of further punishment she took her last two strokes which I delivered with venom, giving her a clear indication of the full power of the strap and my capabilities. Tears fell and I told her she had best mend her ways in a big hurry if she wanted to avoid more of the same.

The following day her mother arrived to talk with our headmaster and I was summoned to confer with the irate parent. The gist of her complaint was what she considered to be the unduly harsh treatment of her daughter and she alluded to "horrendous marks" borne on the palms and fingers of her child when she had arrived home from school the previous day. An examination of the present condition of the girl's hands showed no traces of her punishment from the previous day; a quite normal circumstance twenty four hours after a strapping. However her mother insisted on seeing my strap which her daughter had evidently described in great detail to her mother.

After I had collected it, the girl's mother did think it very thick for a school strap, but I assured her, while it was a heavy model, it was a standard school strap, which had been used by me to punish countless older schoolgirls and was not so very unusual in its size or punishing power. Following this, Moira was asked to attend and when the full extent of Irene's bullying became evident Irene's mother soon sang a different tune. Her daughter who had evidently told her mother less than the full truth surrounding the incident now had to contend with threats of additional punishment for what she had done by way of a bare bottom leathering at home from the leather belt her mother kept for her daughter to correct misbehaviour. As both left our school I heard Irene promising in no uncertain terms to mend her ways.

The head asked me how many strokes I had given Irene. I said six, and he concurred with my judgement, indicating that although he had not directed it and had left the matter entirely to my discretion, six was the number he had hoped I would inflict.

This incident caused me to reflect on straps once again, I well know the punishing power of my XH, but felt it within the ability of delinquents to withstand. I honestly felt I never gave any girl a punishment

which she did not deserve and which, had the tables been reversed, I would not have been prepared to accept myself as my just reward for the crime in question.

Few regulations pertained in Scottish schools regarding the dimensions of straps used for punishment, with the exception of the Glasgow Board of Education which not only laid down very specific details concerning the straps used within their jurisdiction but also provided to teachers their twenty four inch long, one and one half inches wide, three-tailed approved model. A wide freedom of choice was afforded teachers in other boards of education from the myriad of small suppliers of these products. School straps varied in size but all fell within general specifications. They were anywhere from twenty to thirty inches long, and between one and two inches in breadth. Their thickness could vary considerably and while many were around  $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick, some were thicker ranging up to  $\frac{1}{2}$ " in thickness. Consequently straps varied in their respective punishing power!

At some point, probably during the Victorian era in Scotland, the practice of punishing children in school on the bottom fell out of favour. During my era, all government-controlled schools and boards had regulations which forbade this practice, meaning only the open hand (fingers and palm) could be struck with the tawse. The strapping of children's bottoms was only permitted during this century in approved schools and private schools outside government regulation in this regard. However no such restrictions pertained in the home and sensible parents who owned a tawse were free to choose the most suitable area of operation.

I felt the straps in use were ideally suited for the function they fulfilled and speaking from the perspective of an adult were not unduly brutal or severe. They did no long lasting damage to hands or bottoms. As a schoolchild I would probably have said differently, and so I think would all of my friends. The pain was awful at the time of infliction and for several hours thereafter. However that was the whole purpose of the strap! What would be the point of having a strap that doesn't cause a high degree of pain and induce a certain amount of fear in the intended recipient? It was fear of the strap and what it could do that produced improved behaviour from delinquents. Something no amount of lecturing or reasoning ever accomplished. During all my schooldays I never met a strap that was not painful. The only real difference in straps was the degree of pain each imparted. Many were very painful! I think most adults from my own era would agree with me on this matter. During our schooldays we did live in eternal hope of one day meeting a strap that did not hurt, but I feel we only deluded



*The famous John J. Dick maker's stamp on a Lochgelly tawse*

ourselves! The best we could hope for, though rarely encountered, was a teacher who was less than proficient at using her strap. (Certainly no reflection on the implement employed!)

To my knowledge, the Lochgelly strap was the only one that was stamped to indicate weight by the supplier, and this occurred only on later products. The four weight grades supplied by this saddler were intended to cover the age groups from five to seventeen, although in practice the strap was rarely used on children younger than seven years of age. The two lighter grades, L and M, were intended for primary schools and the heavier straps, H and XH, for secondary school age children. However it was not so unusual for heavy straps to be used in primary schools; especially by headmistresses. Many headmistresses rightly felt they should hold something more ominous for a miscreant than the standard classroom strap. Additionally many bigger children upon reaching age eleven or twelve and beyond could stand a fair degree of pain, so something special was sometimes required to get the message across. After a good dose of one of John J. Dick's heavier

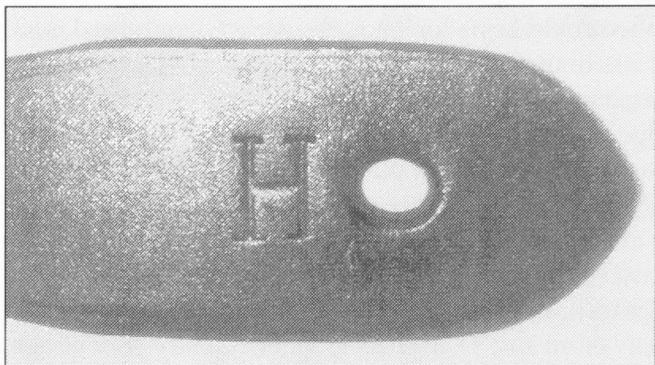


*XH (Extra Heavy) weight stamp on a Dick tawse*



straps every child amended her behaviour for at least a period of time.

Since I never had to buy a strap, that experience is foreign to me. The grading of products by Dick's in Lochgelly made it easier for teachers to get the type of strap they required, and allowed ordering by post or telephone. One could simply specify the length and weight and number of tails desired. From conversations I have had with, I believe special terminology and nomenclature applied to straps and was used by many saddlers. It could be daunting for a teacher (or parent) to have to ask a saddler in a busy shop, "Have you thicker straps than the one in the window?" So a whole range of terminology sometimes applied. "Headmaster special grade" was a term used, and usually signalled



*H (Heavy)  
weight stamp on  
a Dick tawse*

something a good deal heavier than a strap of standard thickness. "Secondary school grade", "primary school grade" and sometimes even "reformatory grade" were terms also used. If all else failed one could merely ask to see the available range of products, though many straps were not stocked, but made to order. As long as a teacher knew exactly what was wanted, a saddler would gladly make the size (length and thickness) and style (number of tails) requested, even if he had to specially order a particularly heavy hide of leather to do so! Tawses were hand-made items, and many saddlers took pride in their finished product and aimed to please in this regard. (At least their customers, the teachers, if not schoolchildren.)

Stories were told during my childhood of teachers using a wide range of techniques to ginger up straps to provide additional sting or in other words to make them more punitive. I can assure the reader I have absolutely no personal knowledge of this ever happening. During my teaching career and for the many decades preceding it teachers were far too busy with lesson preparation and all manner of other matters relating to classroom life to ever consider spending any time in this sort of pursuit. As I previously outlined, if a more punitive strap was

desired by a teacher it was easily and readily obtainable. However, given the number of references to this type of practice in old books it may have some basis in fact with respect to what may have occurred in former times.

By way of speculation, if we turn to some classrooms during the eighteen hundreds, (and here I speak of the single schoolroom or "Dame School" where children across a wide variety of ages were taught in a single room and in many instances by a single teacher) one would not expect a single teacher to have a wide selection of straps at their disposal to deal with pupils across a large age spectrum. One could then speculate certain techniques may have been tried to improve the performance of, perhaps, the only available strap in dealing with an older offender, other than by merely increasing the number of strokes given.

Many schoolchildren generally believed a single punishment could not exceed six strokes. Here I speak of my own teaching era, for it is well documented in former days rules were much laxer and some children were literally thrashed by way of countless strokes for misdeeds at school and home with little concern by anyone for the effect on the child. During my own schooldays, six strokes was not the maximum, and while it was seldom exceeded, particularly with girls, I heard tell of several instances, where boys in secondary school got more. Eight strokes was quite common for older boys and I heard tell of the brother of one of my school friends getting ten strokes for a single offence. I also believe tears were shed by this lad despite his thirteen years of age.

Six strokes was not the maximum at approved school, although in practice classroom punishments there for a single offence rarely exceeded six strokes. I am unable to provide clear evidence of the origin of "six of the best" and since this terminology is widely associated with the cane, I strongly suspect it derives from England. In many schools and boards in latter times six strokes was laid down as a maximum and sometimes only allowed to be given by the headmaster or headmistress. But standards did vary from region to region and no national consensus on this issue was ever reached in Scotland prior to abolition.

A young man I knew engaged me in a discussion of corporal punishment, during which he confided to me he had been given six strokes on each hand by his headmaster at his secondary school during the early nineteen sixties. He felt the punishment he had received was illegal because it exceeded six strokes, and asked I confirm this. I told him this was not the case, and the punishment he had been given was entirely legal and above board. I can assure the reader knowing the

nature of the offence and the character of the individual involved the punishment was fully merited.

While debunking myths I should also deal with any notions the reader may now have formed with respect to my own ability with a tawse. I did not deliberately set out to become a good, hard, strapper. However I admit I was known throughout my career, among all my peers and by my pupils, as “a very proficient warmer of fingers!” My initial concern at eighteen years of age was that I perform at least adequately well to pass muster, and thereby not bring any ridicule upon myself. I can assure the reader I did not spend any substantial amount of time during my probationary period practising this craft, and I was very surprised when I initially learned just how proficient I was with a strap. However in retrospect I now realise I quickly developed a very powerful smooth swing coupled with a high degree of accuracy in placing my strokes. When these attributes are combined with the type of strap I favoured and most often used, namely an extra heavyweight Lochgelly, they proved to be a truly deadly combination! However, I was never embarrassed by my ability. A reputation as a “hard belter” stood many a teacher in good stead, particularly with a new class, and consequently probably resulted in the strap making far fewer actual appearances.

## CHAPTER 11

### THE TAWSE IN USE IN MY HOME

**M**Y two daughters, Sarah and Susan, were very well behaved during their early childhood and I had no reason to ever consider disciplining them with anything harsher than my tongue. Lots of praise, love in unlimited quantity and the occasional rebuke kept both girls firmly in line for many years. Things however changed when my elder daughter entered that difficult teenage period at thirteen years of age. It is a time when a teenager is prone to challenge the authority of both parents to see just how far either of them can be pushed, and if the limits set by parents can be stretched or broken. I also felt the liberalism of the sixties expressed through television and other media was responsible for filling the minds of our children with a good deal of utter nonsense and caused the beginnings of the moral breakdown in large sections of society which occurred. My daughters knew their mother was a school teacher and must have assumed I had a strap at school, but the strap had never been a topic of conversation in their presence and both were unaware their home contained more than one tawse. If either girl had been strapped at school they had not told their mother about it.

The problem with Sarah's behaviour came over a period of time and was noticed by both John and myself. She had begun to influence the behaviour of her sister Susan who was just a year younger than Sarah and I knew I had to put a stop to it as quickly as I could. Having exhausted all other avenues in my attempt to amend her behaviour, I knew a touch of the leather was what was needed and resolved on this course of action. My husband John has a very soft heart for both girls and they could always twist him around their little finger. However their mother is a different proposition, one who is not so easily deceived by feminine guile. It was up to me.

Sarah pulled a temper tantrum to get her own way while arguing with me one Saturday afternoon. My husband was golfing with friends and I resolved to settle the issue.

"Sarah, I do not tolerate such language or behaviour toward me from the girls in my class at school and I certainly will not tolerate such in my own home from my daughter." I went to the cupboard and after a little rummaging I extracted a tawse. It proved to be my medium

weight and given my daughter's age and slim build would be quite adequate. My daughter looked on in disbelief.

"Sarah, you know what happens to disobedient, cheeky schoolgirls. Cross your hands!"

"Oh, mother, this isn't school, please don't!" she said.

"The time for discussion and leniency is long passed, my girl. No nonsense if you know what's good for you!" I responded. My tone of voice now reflected my profession and her hands came to the traditional position. I adopted my usual strapping stance. I had very mixed feelings about what I was about to do, but encouraged by the fact I held a lighter tawse than I usually used I laid on four strokes of my usual magnitude. Sarah did not like it one little bit and I think her surprise at what happened, coupled with the resultant pain, caused her tears to flow freely. When her punishment was over she ran crying to her bedroom, and spent the rest of the afternoon behind closed doors until her sister came home and asked her what had happened.

Susan was equally surprised by my actions when she learned of her sister's fate, but had the good sense to avoid saying anything which might have upset her mother. When my husband John returned home I told him of my actions and although he also was taken aback by what I had done, he did say "I was wondering just what we should do with Sarah. She seems to be getting completely out of hand." I asked my husband not to show any sympathy for Sarah, but to fully support the action I had taken. While it was not easy for him he did comply with my wishes and the message was duly noted by both girls.

The response to my action by both of them was everything I had hoped for. A day later Sarah apologised to me for her outburst and I readily forgave her with a big hug. Both tawses remained stored in the cupboard until one Sunday afternoon some months later. Susan curiously asked to see my strap. I took out both my tawses and showed them to her. She displayed an interest and asked why I had two straps at home. I told of my early days in the girls' reformatory, mentioning some of the punishments inflicted there and since this was the first both girls had heard of this, they listened intently to my story. During my telling Susan carefully examined my straps. When I finished, she even took a few phantom strokes with both of them. Sarah, however, having felt my right arm was much less inclined towards the tale I told, and had left the room long before I finished telling of my early teaching days. At this time Sarah thought her mother was a real ogre!

Susan's final verdict was "You know, mother, I might be a school-teacher when I grow up!"

"Well, you could do worse things with your life, however you still

have a few more years of schooling before you finally decide." I don't quite know what prompted my next question but I enquired, "Susan have you ever had the strap at school?"

"Just once mother, not nearly as often as Sarah."

Before I could respond, Susan followed with "Mother, can I borrow a strap?"

"What for?" I replied.

"I wonder if Sarah wants to play at schools? It might help me to decide!" With that remark Susan displayed a very mischievous grin. Given Sarah's previous experience at my hands I didn't think she would be a willing participant in any such game.

Susan did experience the sting of mummy's tawse a year later. Both girls were punished by me following a stupid escapade, which had been instigated by Sarah. The outcome was six strokes for Sarah and four for Susan on crossed hands from my two-tailed medium weight. I must say Susan took her punishment far better than Sarah and was never again strapped for misbehaviour by me. However Sarah did have one more painful experience from mummy's tawse, this time on her bottom, from my three-tailed heavyweight. This occurred following the acquisition by her of a mini-skirt, an item which had been forbidden by both parents. Her figure was now starting to fill out and she had been foolish enough to be caught by me wearing it. This item was considered to be fashionable at that time, but in my estimation was not suitable for any daughter of mine, and in any case was designed for young ladies considerably older than fourteen years of age.

I was very angry and Sarah accompanied her mother to my bedroom that evening. With great reluctance she bared her bottom and bent over my bed. She fairly yelled as each stroke of my tawse contacted her bottom. When I finished dealing with her, Sarah's bottom was very red, hot and sore and bore the usual evidence of the sound punishment she had received. Tears accompanied the strapping and continued for some time after. However that punishment finally tamed her and she very quickly thereafter abandoned her foolish ways. She exhibited no further behavioural problems during adolescence and in my opinion Sarah turned out a very charming, sensible and intelligent young woman.

Susan did follow her mother into teaching and I gave her the benefit of my many years experience. After completing her probationary period as a teacher, she inherited my three-tailed heavyweight strap. I was still teaching myself at this time so I still had use for my own XH. I made sure she knew just how to use the strap to good effect before entering her classroom. Before giving her my three-tailed heavyweight

strap, I demonstrated its use to her and on her and even allowed her in turn to deliver two practice strokes to her mother. I had not been on the receiving end of a tawse since Morag had strapped me many years ago and the two strokes well delivered still hurt. I found my three tailer almost as painful as my XH. Those strokes told me there and then she could strap just about as well as her mother and would have no problems in her classroom. Susan was keen to practice further with her tawse but Sarah could not be coaxed into acting as a pupil for her younger sister.

Susan did however manage to convince her father to help her out in this regard. My husband John suffered six strokes for an imaginary offence from the hands of his now 'not so wee girl'. To add authenticity to the affair she went through the whole routine of calling him out and lecturing him on his behaviour before delivering three strokes to each hand. I did say the girls could always twist him round their little fingers. When she had finished I watched her father blow into his punished palms, and although he said afterwards it had just been done for effect, I believed he earnestly sought some relief.

That night when John and I were alone in our bedroom I said to him, "You didn't think your little girl could belt so hard did you?"

"No, I didn't," he said. "I didn't know just what I was letting myself in for. I thought it would be easy to take, but it was almost as bad as my school days," he lamented.

"My figure is not the only thing Susan has inherited from her mother. She seems to have a good strong right arm and can well emulate her mother's strapping technique," I mused.

"Boy, am I glad I had neither of you for my teacher during my schooldays," stated John. "Miss Ferguson and Mr. McIntyre were quite bad enough!"

Susan grew up to be very like her mother and in addition to our shared occupation we also enjoy an almost mental telepathic relationship where we both seem to know just what is on each other's mind. I might say Susan used her strap at school for several years until corporal punishment was withdrawn from the school system and to this day, like her mother, laments its loss.

One evening during the height of the abolition controversy both my daughters were home, and given my shared occupation with Susan it was somewhat inevitable this topic would come up for discussion. I knew where Susan and myself stood on the subject but felt Sarah might take an opposing position. Much to my surprise she admitted she was in favour of corporal punishment, and stated the punishments she had received during her childhood both at home and school had done her

the world of good. I was very pleased by my daughter's attitude and just a little surprised. Although on reflection her thoughts would have mirrored those of many folk. None of us liked getting it at the time, but in maturity many realised the benefits of corporal punishment received during childhood.

Sarah admitted she had been strapped a number of times at school but this had been confined to only one stroke on each occasion and just once to two strokes. She had been a bit of a play actor and felt she could manipulate her teachers in this regard. One stroke of the tawse while painful was bearable should her mischief be discovered. When she ran afoul of her mother, she soon found things would be different and fours and sixes were to be the order of the day. She said she found my strappings positively unbearable, particularly the last one I had given her on her bottom. She felt she could not have endured another of those and this more than anything else had brought about swift changes in her attitude and behaviour.

Since the abolition of corporal punishment I seldom talk of classroom discipline matters with my daughter Susan, as this proves to be so very frustrating for her, although to this day she still teaches. Two basic problems seem to be evident since the withdrawal of the ultimate deterrent. The first problem is that of playground bullying. Short of expulsion of the culprits this is now nigh impossible to control. Sad to think how things were so much different when the tawse was playground boss! The second problem is one of lack of general respect toward teachers which is evidenced not only in major behavioural problems but also in any number of small things from talking in class, to lack of attention and respect for those in authority. Those teachers old enough to have known life with the tawse are extremely frustrated by events, however those younger teachers who perhaps have never seen a tawse, let alone one in use, accept things as they are, and while acknowledging the behavioural problems presented by the pupils, seem resigned to accept life as they find it, on the basis that "nothing can be done!" How wrong they are!

The teaching profession now carries little of the prestige it formerly enjoyed and I believe the lack of respect shown by adults and pupils alike toward teachers can be directly attributed to the withdrawal of corporal punishment and the resulting consequences.



## CHAPTER 12

### THE CASE FOR THE RE-INTRODUCTION OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IN SCHOOLS

I CONTINUED to teach until the early nineteen eighties. By then, for a number of years, radicals within the profession, and without, had been getting more than their fair share of attention, in opposing all corporal punishment in schools. Before we knew it, the battle had been lost, and the wisdom of ages was now consigned to the dustbin. I feel the decisions taken at that time did not reflect the wishes of the majority of the population of Scotland, and if the public were to be polled in a referendum I believe they would vote for the re-instatement of corporal punishment in the school systems of Scotland and possibly the North of England, if not Britain as a whole. European Courts be hanged, it is an essential part of child rearing and part of British tradition. As I recall the E.E.C. was originally intended to be a trading alliance with our partners, nothing else! When we joined we were not led to expect the level of interference in our internal affairs that membership has brought. Surely the wishes of our own population on this matter and other matters of a similar nature should prevail.

If corporal punishment was wrong as those opposed to it claimed, and caused serious psychological damage, then the entire Scottish population must have been so affected for generations. For throughout the years, few children in Scotland managed to navigate schooldays without feeling the strap at least once. Those who did witnessed the punishment of others. And yes, it did have an effect on everyone present. It was intended to! No, it wasn't barbaric! It served as a warning to those who received it, and those who witnessed it, regarding the standard of conduct expected of children. It did it in a way no other sanctions could match. Words can cause far more long lasting psychological damage than any tawse ever did. The cut of an unkind word is deeply felt long after the sting of a tawse has died away. Furthermore it was a very inexpensive option.

Why was it so effective? When used in the classroom it sent a very clear message to those who received it. Additionally it sent the same message regarding standards of conduct to those who witnessed its use. This constantly reinforced acceptable standards of behaviour to all. It could be given with minimal interruption to the lesson. Although it

rarely happened, an entire class could be strapped in about five minutes. Normally, the punishment of just one pupil took less than one minute. This included the calling out of the offender from her desk to the front of the classroom, a short lecture from teacher regarding current offence and future conduct, and the infliction of multiple strokes of the strap.

Alternative punishments such as the awarding of lines had a far less dramatic and positive effect on members of the class including the recipient. Teachers during the nineteen seventies and prior to that time routinely coped with class sizes of thirty plus pupils with few disciplinary problems as a result of the presence and occasional use of a tawse. The classroom atmosphere of those days was very conducive to learning. Teachers in the nineteen nineties face a far more stressful time in the classroom as a direct result of the loss of "the ultimate deterrent" which is shown by the number of teachers leaving the profession or seeking early retirement. Additionally in the past there were far fewer discipline problems experienced within the home as a result of the standards of conduct and behaviour enforced at the school level by the tawse.

How did it work? When you say to a child "Don't do that! Teacher (or mummy) is very angry with you!" the words have an impact which may last a few minutes, but seldom for any longer period. When the strap says "Don't do that!" the voice of the strap (via the pain engendered) is heard for several hours by the punished child. A child's conception of time is very different from that of an adult and several hours or the bulk of a day is a very long period of time to a child. The key to administering this type of punishment was to ensure the message sent was the correct one in terms of severity. Thus for a serious offence, four strokes or more of the tawse said to the child in question "Don't you ever do that again!" And in my experience they didn't! However lesser offences, such as talking in class, were punished by one, or at most two strokes of the tawse. It didn't guarantee the offence would never again be committed by the girl in question. What it did ensure was that all conversation at that time in class ceased, and chattering tongues were not heard for the balance of the lesson. Additionally the girl(s) so punished, would not offend again in the same manner in class for some time. And indeed for some girls, never again in my class. However, realistically, many girls are chatterboxes and they could not refrain from talking. The tawse though controlled the degree to which they offended and the atmosphere of the classroom.

Giving the strap was a fine balance with respect to severity. It should really be given with the least amount of strokes to get the job done;

bearing in mind the offence committed and the tolerance the recipient has for pain. This would sometimes be known in the case of a girl one had previously punished. Or could be gauged by age and physical size with respect to a girl one had not dealt with before. Additionally a child's reaction to the strokes of the strap also told a tale, and one could curtail a punishment when the objective had been reached.

Some of the loud vociferous abolitionists of corporal punishment had never been corporally punished themselves as children and as a consequence they knew and understood very little in this regard. Additionally I felt they had no great desire to learn. I must be honest and admit (being only human myself) after engaging some of them in discussion on this topic, or reading, or hearing the outrageous statements many of them made regarding this issue, I did fantasise—here I go again—about having them before me on the floor of my classroom while I engaged them in really serious debate on this subject, employing my heaviest tawse to assist me in conveying my message. Where were all those hard-belted teachers I had known during my schooldays when these abolitionists had been schoolchildren?

Did it affect those who administered it? I took no pleasure from strapping the girls in my care. And with the exception of my strapping of my brother Donald and my two daughters I would not say I felt any great personal pain when I administered it. I'm sorry but the old saying "this is going to hurt me, more than you," rarely applied in my case! I admit that in a few circumstances when I had been openly defied, or if a girl had been extremely cheeky or impudent to me, I could not wait to get my desk opened, and get my strap out, and deal with her! However, once the strapping commenced the anger and tension seemed to drain from me as I concentrated on the task in hand and any malice built up inside me seemed to quickly abate. The details of my own punishment at the hands of Mrs. Morrison I think demonstrate this circumstance quite clearly although in this instance I was on the other end.

I think this was very beneficial and far healthier than those instances which occur today where because the tawse is no longer an available option, wrath is held within a teacher, or parent, and exacted on the child over a far longer period of time by way of the human tongue, a potentially far more severe weapon than any tawse. One capable of producing some very long lasting scars on a child! Additionally there are many alternative punishments which have been used over the years on children which are far more painful psychologically than any tawse, and in some cases degrading, and I certainly do not condone or sanction their use!

In all cases I strapped an offending child because I felt it to be, not merely beneficial, but necessary for a child's moral development. Yes, even within my own family. My fondest memories of my days in the classroom do not contain a tawse. When children behaved, the strap stayed in the desk. However the reality is such that I cannot forget my use of such an item. I certainly don't think of myself as being warped in mind either through using it as a teacher or mother or receiving it as a child. I must say while it was given on occasion (deservedly) quite severely, I never once saw it administered without just cause, or given in a sadistic manner during all my years as pupil and teacher. Furthermore it was not used as a first resort but more as a final resort. An old Scottish Education maxim was "never use a tawse if a word will do, but if word after word will not do..."

I believe A.S. Neil (a Scottish schoolteacher who for many decades promoted radical "progressive" views on education, and child-centred learning theories, which included no corporal punishment for children) was wrong. His theories when put into practice allowed the well-disciplined atmosphere of the classroom, which was very conducive to learning and to the teaching of basic skills such as the three R's, to disappear. In turn teachers were now able to evade responsibility and accountability for the academic performance of the pupils in their class. If I may be permitted to say this "Scottish Education at one time was a model for the world and produced very high academic standards." The tawse was just one of many contributing factors in this regard! To outline all the reasons for the decline in the quality of education would require a large amount of paper and result in at least one other book and I will not elaborate any further on this issue. However I think many readers may agree with my thoughts in this regard.

Those of us of sufficient years to have known life in a society which did not have substantial numbers of children (and adults) out of control, and by this I mean not merely misbehaving, but committing crimes which would have led to the approved school (or jail) in former years, must be grateful for our own childhood. However we do grieve for the children and adolescents of today and those unborn generations to follow.

Who has gained by the withdrawal of the strap from schools? Certainly not society at large, nor even the children who have been "spared" from its use. Only those social workers and others who have a personal vested interest in far more expensive and elaborate cures for the "maladjusted or problem child." Cures which are ever evolving in complexity and ballooning in cost and which produce less than satisfactory end results. I think far too much credence has been given to

these so-called experts. A certain American citizen who for many decades was recognised as the guru of child-rearing and whose philosophies were religiously followed has now I believe admitted he knew just as little about the subject as anyone else, and in fact made much of it up as he went along without any supporting evidence for his theories. How many others in this field have emulated him?

How did parents manage to raise normal, healthy, well-balanced children for countless generations without the benefit of the pearls of wisdom from these twentieth century so-called experts? It is interesting to note that those who have the most to say on this and other topics of child-rearing have in many instances never raised any children of their own. A little common sense on the subject goes a long way!

What has been lost by its withdrawal? A healthy respect for those in authority, commencing with our teachers, and continuing through all other authority figures in our society. Withdrawal has had a very negative effect on the overall quality of life enjoyed by us all. Just witness the crime rate and the overall attitude and behaviour of large numbers of people in society today. One need think no further than the foul language in vogue today heard from adolescents and adults alike.

We rob our children of the happiest days of their lives by hurrying them through childhood to adolescence and maturity. For the life of me I don't know why with all the problems to be faced by adolescents and adults in the world today. Childhood used to be and still should be the happiest days of one's life. Happiness is not achieved in childhood by the number of toys or other possessions a child might have but through loving parents or guardians and a life governed by sensible rules and discipline when required. A life where a child knows at all times where he stands and can learn to distinguish right from wrong. Furthermore a child is entitled to a life which is free from the persistent bullying of other children or molestation or abuse by adults. Child abuse can occur when a child is struck with the first thing which comes to hand. We do not know the punitive effect of many items and injury to a child may result from their misuse. However a purposely designed implement (tawse, cane or paddle etc.) used for a reasonable number of strokes (let's say a maximum of six not fifty) will result in a reasonable punishment for a child.)

We withhold from our children the knowledge required to distinguish between right and wrong in their everyday actions and behaviour. The tawse certainly taught that and still can but only in a child's formative years between the ages of six and sixteen. At that time the mind of a child is responsive to firm, fair reasonable corporal punishment and can be moulded to accept standards of behaviour.

Standards of behaviour learnt in childhood stay for the rest of one's life. The same result cannot be achieved at a later point in a person's life either through "boot camps" or prison. Additionally I do not believe one can bring about any serious beneficial behavioural changes in adults through the use of corporal punishment and therefore I do not advocate the flogging of adult criminals. It may make a few of us feel better by way of retribution, but I think it does little else. I am not morally opposed to the flogging of adults, but merely feel it does not work. I do not have a closed mind on this subject; but I would like to see clear evidence before I will change my mind on this issue. But a tawse (or cane) used during a child's formative years would ensure a substantial drop in the prison population in later years.

The comparison made between the strapping and caning of children with the flogging of adult prisoners with a cat of nine tails was often used by abolitionists, their rationale being 'since we don't flog criminals anymore we certainly should not hit children.' I believe a clear difference exists between the results which are readily achieved in each case, and contend children are responsive while adults do not immediately show the same behavioural improvement. We were assured by the abolitionists other alternative punishments for children would work equally well. In my opinion they have not!

It is interesting to note the abolitionists seldom campaigned for a trial period of withdrawal. The platform insisted upon was always total abolition without conditions. Did they well realise in advance what would be the end result of their mischief? On several occasions during the nineteen seventies various schools and school boards in Scotland and Northern England instituted a ban on corporal punishment. The cost to the institutions from vandalism alone committed by the pupils in many instances brought about a hasty re-introduction! In no instances where corporal punishment was banned for a trial period that I am aware of was there any evidence to suggest any optimism with respect to the resulting behaviour of pupils! I do not believe any statistical evidence exists that would lead us to believe children are better behaved without corporal punishment. Quite the contrary; just look at the juvenile delinquency rate in Singapore versus any western country!

How many of us have noticed over the last four decades the relationship between the rise in muggings and violent crime by adolescents and the decline of the use of corporal punishment on children. It is not rocket science and not that difficult for the average citizen to figure out, yet our leaders and the "politically correct" refuse to take note! As a parent what would concern you more regarding the welfare of your

child, and what would you consider to be the greater threat in their lives; drugs, or a tawse? Perhaps if the tawse had been in use in schools in recent times we would not now be experiencing the same drug problem among the young, or the large number of spoiled brats in society today. The simple measure is whether we as a society are happy with the general behaviour of children and adolescents? Additionally do we believe they were better behaved when corporal punishment was widely employed?

Did corporal punishment invariably work? No, I do not think so. I will be the first to admit there is a group of offenders for whom corporal punishment does not work. These children are very small in number relative to the total population and are the offenders who do require psychiatric treatment. However many have been wrongly used as examples to refute corporal punishment of children. The logic advanced being that the adolescent or adult as a result of experiencing corporal punishment as a child is now psychologically damaged resulting in antisocial behaviour. Wrong! The offender having misbehaved as a child was punished. However the punishment merely failed to deliver the desired result of improved behaviour. The punishment received by the individual as a child was not responsible for causing personality disorders within the individual, such disorders being present and producing antisocial behaviour before corporal punishment was ever experienced by the child. If a child is corporally punished several times and no apparent improvement is noted in his behaviour, then the child probably has a psychiatric disorder and needs a different form of therapy.

We are constantly informed by the media of every available example of "how corporal punishment failed to work and additionally damaged the life of a child by warping its mind." We seldom, if ever, hear of the countless number of instances where a child headed in the direction of a life of crime *etc.* was swiftly turned around by a simple dose of the tawse or cane administered at the correct time in the child's life!

Do you believe the media are unbiased in how they report on these kinds of issues?

What can be done? If you agree with my rationale refuse to be silent on this issue any longer. Talk it up with your neighbours and friends, find out how they feel and with your support this issue can return to the political agenda once again. Do it for the sake of this nation! Moves are afoot internationally at the moment to ban all corporal punishment of children. Yes, even within the home. If that comes about it will be a tragedy for mankind and a giant backward step.

The general public has been "conned" in many western countries

through the use of certain terminology. "Cruel or unusual punishment", for example. The general population took this to mean outright torture and other sadistic acts. However the "politically correct" have interpreted this in its narrowest form and literal definition to mean anything which causes pain, suffering or hardship. Show me a punishment which is outside the sphere of "cruel and unusual" as defined by the theorists. Strapping an offending child is by no means cruel or unusual to me! However just depriving a teenager who can drive of the keys to the family car could be considered as a cruel or unusual punishment by those folks! The result of this attitude is no corporal punishment for children and criminals housed in institutions which more closely resemble hotels rather than prisons. No genuine punishment for offenders! Just appeals to their better judgement and reason! Well in most cases it just doesn't work, and I don't think that's what the general public wants.

I wonder how many readers share my feelings regarding the decline in moral standards of our population commencing in the 'liberal sixties'. I believe the philosophies and attitudes promoted and advanced at that time and since have been disastrous for the moral welfare of this nation. Those of us old enough to remember the fifties long for a return to the moral values of that period. The moral and traditional values this nation held and exhibited through our entire population at that time and earlier were the envy of all other nations in the world! How we were ever motivated into surrendering our civilised behaviour by the press and other mass media is beyond me! The experience of declining standards is not confined to Britain alone but also shared by other western societies as moral standards fall across the board. As corporal punishment of children has declined, violence and crime committed by children has risen proportionately in all western society.

The crime-ridden society we now enjoy is of our own making and we have no one to blame but ourselves for allowing those who opposed corporal punishment to triumph. Far too many people who shared my sentiments regarding law and order and corporal punishment lay silent and allowed the media to influence us into accepting their position on this topic on the basis that the so-called "experts" knew best. I am convinced that at that time the silent majority was in favour of corporal punishment. I am also reminded of the famous statement, "All that is required for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing!" Do we now have the necessary will power and determination to reverse this trend and bring about the changes we seek? We can begin by insisting we are not going to put up with the level of crime currently committed by juveniles and the government can either take immediate steps to



reduce it to the level of the 1950s or we insist on the return of Approved Schools with corporal punishment for offenders for at least a trial basis, let us say a minimum of ten years!

Do I feel any remorse for my past actions? Certainly not! While I could not document the number of times I used the strap during my career, I was invariably delighted by the end results it produced in the children with whom I dealt. I believe it was an implement well designed for its intended task!

I believe that I, along with countless thousands of teachers during my own era and throughout many past generations, influenced the development of children of this country in a very positive manner regarding their morals and standards of behaviour. Corporal punishment was a major contributing factor in this task.

Some may think I am wrong and possibly feel I should feel remorse. However, I believe corporal punishment should be re-instated in schools, and the approved school should return with corporal punishment in sufficient severity (i.e. reformatory grade straps, and canes, and possibly even the reformatory birch) for those youngsters who warrant it. I rest my case and stand by my past deeds and present thoughts. Hopefully this upside-down world we currently live in will pass, and sanity prevail once again.

Now we have had time to view the results of twenty odd years or so of no corporal punishment in schools, it would be very interesting to view the results of a trial period of re-introduction, consisting of ten or twenty years. Those teachers morally opposed to its use can simply refrain from employing it. It would also be interesting to view the comparative behaviour patterns of children attending classes where it was employed versus those where it was absent. For I am fully convinced those immortal words "come out to the front of this class, and hold out your hands" followed by a few loud thwacks, would send a very clear message to today's children and in time right much of what is currently wrong in this country!

Much has been said and written over the years concerning corporal punishment of schoolchildren (and adults) and the relationship with sadism and masochism which may surface later in life. I am not going to deal with this at any great length as many other works exist on this topic alone should the reader be so interested. I would say however it is unfortunate a relationship does seem to exist, for it is often misused during debate to muddy the true substance and nature of the merits of corporal punishment for children. This relationship is often misunder-

stood and is almost invariably misused deliberately or otherwise in discussions of this topic.

From my own experience I know of no instances of a child after having been punished by me or a colleague then deliberately seeking further corporal punishment. Quite the contrary. Children would go to incredible lengths to try avoid punishment. Additionally I know of no instances of deliberate sadism where a schoolchild was punished merely to satisfy some desire of a schoolteacher. I know of no teacher commencing their day with the uppermost thought; who shall I strap or cane today? Indeed most teachers were delighted when corporal punishment was not a factor in their school day. For it meant one's charges had been well behaved; a joy for any teacher. One could not predict when one would need to use a strap and very often many weeks would pass in my classroom without my having to resort to the taws, while on other occasions it might be used more than once in the same week. There is a world of difference between a sadist and a strict disciplinarian, which I admit to being. Any sadist, or anyone punishing for mere self-gratification, would soon have been given their marching papers even at the girls' approved school.

The withdrawal of corporal punishment from schools has not (from my very limited knowledge based upon what I read in the mass media), eliminated or even reduced the level of interest in society in S&M and related activities practised by certain people in the bedrooms of our land. Just as the abolition of punishment of adults in the army and navy or in jails had little effect. For I believe the relationship here is tenuous at best. If every person who experienced corporal punishment as a child developed a desire for it in later life then almost the entire population of this country of ours in former times must have been practising S&M during their adult life. Something not supported by fact and which I just do not believe to be true! How many adults who were flogged with a cat of nine tails in prison were keen to relive this experience in all its severity in the bedroom prior to marital consummation? There is a world of difference between true punishment and what may take place in a bedroom. The games of this nature played by certain adults in a sexual context are generally played by folk who have no real experience of the fantasy they indulge in. This is all part of the appeal, for it is indeed a fantasy! The implements used for such games in most instances are not real and many are specially designed not to hurt.

It is part of human nature to engage in fantasy in sexual connexions and is entirely natural. This spans a whole spectrum of activities generated by that wonderfully creative engine, the human imagination. It is however interesting to note that despite the permissive attitude

shown to almost every other aspect of sexual conduct these days, this area remains taboo. Modern society tolerates all sorts of violent activities—one need think no further than boxing matches—but abhors any activities of an S&M nature even when practised between consenting adults in the privacy of their own bedroom. People in authority felt if corporal punishment was abolished in all institutions all S&M activities engaged in by adults would cease. I think current evidence provided by the mass media proves just how false this type of thinking is.

In closing, there is one further thing I should mention in regard to the corporal punishment of children. “The use of the tawse to correct academic failure.” I personally never experienced or witnessed or employed this method during all my days as a pupil and teacher so the reader should not be surprised to find it missing from the preceding chapters of this book. However when I was a girl I had several friends who because of their different religion to mine attended a different school to myself. They told stories of a teacher, a certain Mrs. McBride. This woman by all accounts had a fearsome strap and used it not just to correct wrongdoing but also to “reward” academic failure. Those girls lived in terror of school and what might befall them for mistakes which they perhaps could not avoid. Anyone failing this woman’s regular tests on schoolwork had best look out! They were guaranteed to get the strap, the number of strokes administered given on a sliding scale, commensurate with a pupil’s degree of failure of any given test.

When a child misbehaves she does so wilfully and knowingly, and deserves what befalls her, but to be strapped for merely giving a wrong answer to a question hardly seems fair. The tawse, I believe, was seldom used in this manner, but it did occur. However in order to prevent this type of misuse, most boards of education very wisely enacted rules and regulations banning such use.

I would like to thank my publisher “The Wildfire Club” for all the assistance they have provided which allowed this manuscript to evolve into book form and be published. It is not easy these days for people holding opinions similar to mine to find a publisher for works which tell a story of the strap. Or to express views on subjects such as corporal punishment. Views which are to say the least now considered to be “politically incorrect”. Much of what I, and people like me, feel is not shared by the so-called “intelligentsia” of today’s society! However myself and those sharing my views are entitled to our own opinion and we still make up a far larger slice of the population than those in authority would like to admit. I encourage all readers to form their own opinion on corporal punishment, and many other topics, which may be deemed controversial. The new world order is not for every-

one, and while tolerance is touted by those proponents of the new order; in reality, in the name of conformity, it will seldom be extended. Make no mistake, the weapon which will be used against those failing to comply to the new world standards or opposing their doctrines will be ridicule! A very powerful weapon indeed!

I think the March 1998 decision by the British Parliament to ban corporal punishment in all schools demonstrates a clear lack of tolerance. For this action was not taken in response to requests from concerned parents or even punished children, but merely to deny parents a choice in this matter in the name of political ideology and conformity to new world standards. Those of us who cherish different standards and higher ideals are simply not accommodated. If you share my concerns and beliefs the time for political action has arrived.

I am deeply grateful for the high degree of tolerance the Wildfire Club have shown in allowing my manuscript to be published in its entirety with few editorial changes. The sentiments and philosophies expressed in the book are mine and mine alone and although many of my sentiments and philosophies may be shared by the fine ladies of this group, they should not necessarily be construed by the reader as reflecting the entire philosophy of the Wildfire Club or any member thereof.

## GLOSSARY OF SCOTS WORDS CONTAINED IN THE TEXT

**Belt (the):** A slang expression used to describe a school strap, or tawse; most commonly heard in the lowlands of Scotland, i.e. Glasgow and a large surrounding area. Also used as a verb; to belt a child was to punish them with the strap or tawse.

**Besom:** A derogatory term used primarily in conjunction with a child or woman.

**Dour:** Of a person, without much humour or sullen, also firm or severe.

**Kick the Can:** A children's game based upon hide and seek, where those who are found are placed in a holding area called the "den". Those caught can however be freed by someone evading capture and "kicking the can" from the den area. Whereupon the search begins anew.

The game terminates when all are caught and safely in the den.

**Kirk:** A church, more correctly the established Presbyterian Church, but used of all branches of the Presbyterian Church and some other churches, though not R.C.

**Lochgelly (a):** A punishment strap or tawse manufactured by John J. Dick, a saddler's business operated in Lochgelly, Fife. Dick was the principal supplier of straps to schools in Scotland.

**Midden:** Sometimes used to describe a dustbin; but more correctly the area where dustbins are stored.

**Mince & Tatties:** A popular Scottish dish consisting of ground beef, spiced with onions and Bisto gravy, and potatoes which is usually supplemented by at least one vegetable.

**Peever:** The game of hopscotch, or beds. Beds refers to the chalked board on which the game is played. The smooth stone used in the game is also called a peever.

**Tawse:** A school strap, or punishment strap of split tailed design manufactured by any supplier, usually a saddler.

**Wean:** A child.

**Wee:** Small, especially of a younger sister or brother.

## APPENDIX

### SCOTTISH CHILDREN'S RHYMING SONG

*Our wee school, is a nice wee school, it's made of bricks and plaster,  
The only thing, that's wrong with it, is the baldy headed master.  
He goes to the pub each Saturday, he goes to church on Sunday,  
To pray to God , to give him strength, to belt the weans on Monday.*

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